VEDANTIC WAY OF LIVING

SWAMI BHOOMANANDA TIRTHA

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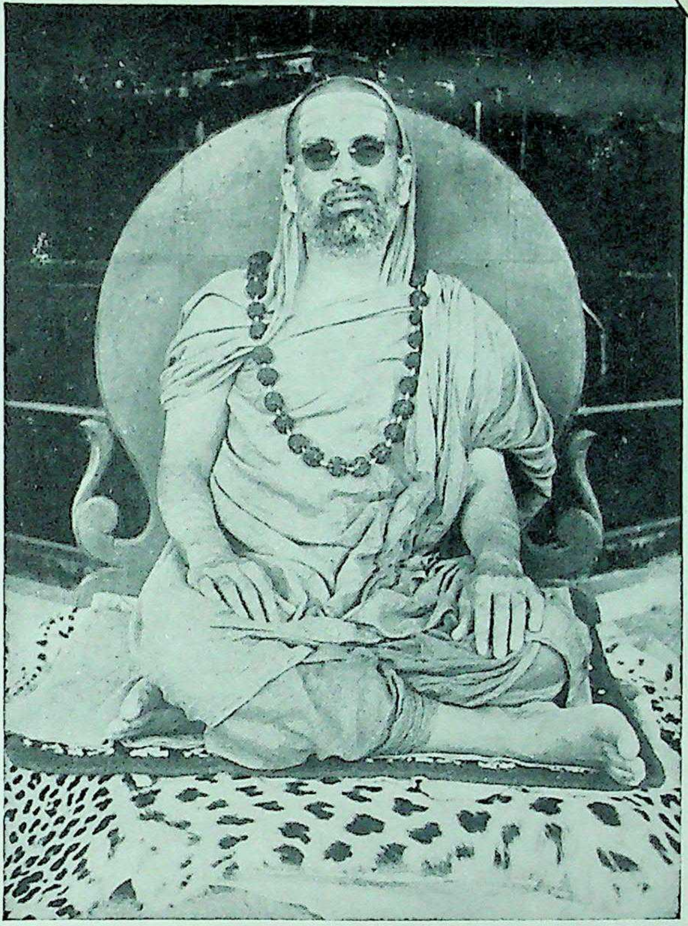

His Holiness Sri Sri Abhinava Vidya Thirtha Maha Sannidhanam the Jagadguru, Sri Sankaracharya Dakshinamnaya Sri Sarada Peetam, Sringeri.

FOREWORD

During February 1970 the Brahma Vidya Abhyasakas of Madras had the pleasure of attending the lucid and simple exposition of the principles and practice of Vedanta by Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha. This led the devotees to feel that these talks should be published as a book to enable those who attended them to continuously use it as a guide in their Brahma Vidya Abhyasa and to make the benefit of the lectures available to the thousands of others who strive to seek the Truth. As a realisation of such desire, these seven discourses are presented in this publication.

"Vedantic Way of Living"—as this book is rightly named—begins with a simple restatement of the definition of Vedanta, by establishing that it is not an abstract form of knowledge or the intellectual exercises of elderly scholars but is the art of self-perfection within the reach of everyone of us. Progressively explaining the futility of material pleasures, it delineates in a simple and logical manner the Ultimate Reality and the methods of realising It.

Even at the time of pronouncing the Gita, Lord Krishna says that the path to Realisation is lost due to efflux of time. This is only too true of our present time. So it is all the more necessary that such publications and guidances are available to us.

In the same way as a disease does not get cured merely by mentioning the name of the drug without taking it, Realisation does not come by talking about Brahman; it has to be sought for incessantly. It is our fond hope that this book will guide all aspirants for Self-realisation in succeeding in their efforts.

This book is based on the notes of the lectures prepared by Miss K. V. Seetha and its publication has been made possible due to the untiring efforts of Dr (Mrs.) Sarada Subrahmanyam.

Madras, Brahma Vidya Sangh.
11th July, 1970.

II

We have great pleasure in stating that our anticipations were fully fulfilled. The publication of Sri Swamiji's lectures in book form has proved beneficial to many seekers of Truth and, therefore, we have brought out this second edition of the book so that the book may reach still wider circles.

Brahma Vidya Sangh
May, 1975.

P.S. Our thanks are due to Smt. Meena Subrahmaniam of Kalpa Printers & Publishers Private Limited, P. 142, G. Block, New Alipore, Calcutta-53, for bringing out the second edition of "Vedantic Way of Living". This is her dedicated work.

VEDANTIC WAY OF LIVING

Talks delivered in the Sai Samaj Hall, Mylapore, Madras,
from the 22nd February to 28th February 1970,
from 7 to 8-30 p.m. every day.

Blessed souls:

Hari Om Tat Sat. It pleases me to be in your midst for a short period as this. During this period, I shall talk to you on a theme which is most dear to your hearts and extremely nourishing to your minds and souls.

Our land is a holy one. So too the people who live on it are greatly fortunate and blessed. The reason for it is the greatness of the spiritual wealth which our country and people possessed thousands of years ago, and which even today is found with us, perhaps in a lesser measure.

This spiritual wealth is found in the Vedas. The Vedas are the words of Truth revealed by the most ancient thinkers of our land, the Rishis. Before revealing the Vedas they had done prolonged penance and meditation. Vedas are to us a basic book of knowledge, a sacred mass of literature from which we can gather the immortal religious and spiritual truths

Our forefathers had an intense love for knowledge. They were bent upon discovering the most subtle and abstruse laws relating to the human life and soul. To this end they thought and thought until their thinking mind itself gave way to rip open the mystery of existence, not merely of themselves but of the entire creation. The Vedas, more so the Vedanta, embody the exalted inner spiritual states reached by our ancient thinkers and the truths they perceived while remaining in those states. Being so, not to show enough of love and respect to the Vedas will be to betray our own heredity, our own parentage. If you are an Indian, then you should be a lover of the Vedas too. Else, declare that you are not an Indian.

To study and understand the Vedic literature will be to sharpen your power of understanding, to aid and fulfil your quest for knowledge, for peace and well-being. It is not, as some are apt to think, to delight in 'prospects and prophecies' that the Vedas teach us. It is, on the other hand, to think seriously about 'the immediate and the present' and thereafter to act upon it with a full measure of wisdom and concern. The Vedas help us to understand our life fully and then work our way to fulfilment. They urge us more *to know* than *to do* or *not to do*. But this is a fact seldom understood by the Vedic followers.

With these words of introduction, let me go into the subject for today's talk. But before that, I must express my love and gratitude to all of you for having assembled here to think aloud with me and understand the spiritual truths.

In this series of talks, each day we will take up one subject. All the subjects are closely connected with one another, and they come under the broad title "Vedantic way of living".

Today, I shall provide an introduction which will enable you to understand what Vedanta is and what bearing it has on our day-to-day life and work. For this, we shall analyse the very title 'Vedantic way of living', and see what it denotes.

The title can be divided into two parts. One part would be 'way of living', and the other 'Vedantic'. What do these signify ?

'Living' is a word quite meaningful to all. Every one has to face the facts of life and living for the simple reason that he has been born in the world. Thus, to live becomes a natural urge for us all. But before proceeding to live, we should study and know what our life is, and then evolve the right ideals of living.

In other words, our nature prompts us to evolve the right manner of living, which will gain for us the ideals we set before us and thereby lead us to fulfilment. Why is this so ? What makes an enquiry into life and living necessary for us ?

We, the humans, are living creatures like so many other creatures in the world. We generally mean by 'creature' a living thing or organism endowed with the five senses of perception. Whatever thing is found to possess these senses is called a living creature. Thus worms, insects, reptiles, birds, animals, etc , are classified as creatures. The human too is a kind of creature, no doubt. But he differs greatly from the other creatures. The difference is not so much in the shape of his body, or in the powers of his senses and or the number of his limbs. If you describe man as *a double-footed animal*, then there are several others like him. So, the difference is not merely an outer one. It is primarily one of the mind, something inner and finer. The following verse will clarify the point:

आहारनिद्राभय मैथुनानि
समानि चैतानि नृणां पशूनां ।
ज्ञानं नराणां अधिको विशेषो
ज्ञानेन हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः ॥

With regard to the needs for food, sleep and security from fear, says the verse, we and the other creatures have no difference at all. We eat food and so too the animals. The need for sleep is also common. The sense of fear and the urge to get away from it are dominant in both humans and animals alike.

But there is something which the animals lack but we possess. It is the thirst for knowledge, for wisdom, and the power to quench it. Truly, it is the power and will to achieve knowledge that mark man as a superior creation. Being so, if he fails to culture *knowledge* and abide by it in all that he does and thinks, it would be the forsaking of his humanness and descending to the animal level.

Judged from this angle, to enquire into and know our life and living becomes a sheer necessity for us. A careful study of our life and the selection of the right ideals in it will alone quench our thirst for knowledge. To show the least neglect in this regard would be wrong, ignoble and damaging.

I must say a thousand times that in man it is *knowledge* that works topmost. But in animals it is not so; it need not be either . For instance, the cow eats food and drinks water every day. In spite of it, does the animal know what its food is made up of, what purpose it serves, which items are poisonous, etc. ? There are several instances where cows and other animals have died merely on taking poisonous food.

But think of man. Even before he takes his food, he can, if he wants to know what it is made of, whether it is poisonous or not, etc. He knows that the water he drinks is, though a liquid, composed of two gases, hydrogen and oxygen.. Thus, for the humans there is a clear chance for gaining and culturing knowledge at all times, in all matters. And this possibility alone renders our life creative and successful. To be successful on earth, therefore, what we should first do is to analyse and understand the implications of life and living. This is how Vedanta or practical philosophy stands before us as a subject of interest and utility.

A study of Vedanta is truly a study of our life itself. "What is life ?" This is one of the main questions which Vedanta takes up for study. We shall discuss this question tomorrow taking it as a full subject for the talk. Today our object is to understand the place and meaning of the Vedas and Vedanta.

Our ancients had a unique habit. It was to relate every branch of study and knowledge to God or the Divine. They were first religious before they were anything else. Naturally, the religious life and thinking were to them the foundation for everything. Hence, they went on thinking religiously about the causes of the world, its existence and operation.

Human thinking relating to any subject has to be a gradual process. No attempt at knowledge can generally fruition all of a sudden. This must be true of the religious thinking of our Rishis too. Hence, their thinking was marked by a beginning, a base. It then underwent a gradual progession. And finally it reached the climax, the end. I shall tell you about these as far as I am able to understand the whole process with my innocent nature.

Religious life or thinking was not any idle pursuit with our ancient men. Nor was it anything unrelated to the present life and work. Their conception of God or Divinity was not an outcome of mere emotion. It was a demand of reason too. They were particular in submitting their beliefs to the tests of reason, to the analysis of the intellect. For they held that the intellect was what made the humans the topmost of all creations.

With their emotion and reason both at work, they gazed at the wide, endless world. The variety and number of the creatures found in the world was itself enough to astound them. What about the mighty earth then ? The oceans ? The burning fire ? The blowing wind ? Above all, the endless expanse of space above ? All these filled them with admiration, awe and devotion.

Who could create all these, they thought. For the rule with anything found to exist in the world is that it must first have a birth. The birth immediately implies a progenitor. Therefore, they wondered who could possibly have produced or given birth to the mighty earth, the deep oceans, the scorching fire and the powerful wind ? They could not have been human beings obviously. The human power is strictly limited. The super-humans alone could then be the parents of these elements (*bhoothaas*). The various Devas or Devathas mentioned in the first part of the Vedic literature were invented thus. They are the celestial beings to whom the Vedic thinkers ascribed the birth and existence of the things in the world.

How many Gods or Devathas are there ? According to the first thoughts of the Vedic thinkers, there were several. The basic elements in the world were not one. Hence, the Deities in charge of them had also to be several, not one. Thus earth represented one Deity. So also fire, wind and so on.

Looking high up in the sky the thinkers could notice the luminaries like the Sun, Moon, etc. Life on earth depended on these luminaries as much as upon the elements (*boothaas*). This thought led them to assign to the luminaries also the status of Devas. Pursuing the thought further, they traced the existence and powers of the five senses too to their distinct Deities. Thus the eye had its Devata, so too the ear and so on. In the same way, the mind within the body also found its presiding Deity. Thus the things outside and inside alike pointed to them the existence of many celestial Deities. To live the life on earth was, therefore, to depend fully on the mercy of the Deities. The thought of the Devas and the need for invoking their mercy thus became quite alive in the minds of our ancient thinkers.

The first portion, called *Samhita,* of the Vedas was the visible outcome of these thoughts. Samhita consists mostly of praise, hymns in praise of the different Deities. Why is the Samhita eulogistic in nature ?

Suppose you find someone superior to you, holding far greater powers than yours, what will you do ? You will stand, with folded hands, in all piety, admiration and respect. If at all you accost him, it will be in terms of praise and respect. The same was the attitude of our thinkers of ancient times. The very idea of the controlling Deities was enough to fill them with reverence, obedience and dependence. And they proceeded to express these sentiments in colourful hymns and poetry. The hymns praise the Deities to whom they are addressed and beg of them their mercy and blessings. Their tune is quite natural for the sentimental human mind.

Time passed and with that the thinking of the Vedic seers also advanced. They started feeling that to just go on chanting humble prayers before the Deities was not enough. How could mere vocal praises satisfy any one, more so the celestial beings? We respect and love our parents. But do we stop with the offer of words of praises to them ? Our love and respect compel us to take their welfare and needs into account. That is why we offer them food and drink first, before we take these for ourselves. To do so is our minimum duty. If this be the case with regard to our parents, what should it be with regard to the Presiding Deities, to whom the world as a whole owes its existence ? Thus thinking, the urge to make material offers, in addition to vocal praises, to the Deities sprouted in the Vedic Rishis' minds. That, in turn, gave rise to the second section of the Vedas, called Brahmanas.

But how to offer anything material to the celestial powers ? The Deities had no physical bodies. How could they then avail of the material offers, as do our parents ? Until the thing offered was made use of by the Deities concerned, what consolation or satisfaction could the offerers derive ? Thus they reached a deadlock in their religious life.

Human imagination is, of course, very fertile. It can work great wonders. Fire is a thing which has the capacity to accept mostly anything and then reduce it to ashes. The Vedic Rishis felt that this capacity of fire could be utilised by them to resolve their deadlock. In their view, fire already had the position of a God. Now the Fire God became more important and useful. They decided to prepare altars and then place fire on it, with the chanting of mantras and hymns. Thereafter, they made oblations of ghee, boiled rice, cereals, etc. (all burnable items) into the fire with suitable invocations. Shooting forth in flames, the Fire God consumed all the offers, as though in a mood of elation and delight. This sight consoled the thinkers' minds. The result was that they conceived of numerous rituals and ceremonies intended to beget various objects like heaven, son, etc. These rituals which promise distinct rewards for their performers fill several pages of the Vedic literature. They are called the Brahmanas or the Brahmana section. The Brahmana section is the second.

But the ceremonial phase of religious life had also to pass off. For, it means the use of money, materials, etc., the supervision by priests, the presence of wife and other factors. No one could perform the rituals all by himself. The ceremonial life was, therefore, viewed as unfeasible. During old age, how could one afford all the needs of the rituals ? Besides, it was a custom with our ancients to retire from active domestic life on getting old, and then take to a lonely life in some secluded spot. This meant being alone, to be devoid of all material resources. How then could they think of continuing the ritualistic mode of life ? At the same time, they wanted to preserve their religious tendencies and aspirations. This meant the evolving of a new phase of religion, a proxy for the elaborate ceremonial life.

It was then that the third section of the Vedas was produced. It is called the *Aranyaka*. *Aranya* means forest, and *aranyaka* would denote that which relates to the forest or forest life. The *Aranyakas* emobody the meditative aspect of religious life. In them are prescribed various kinds of meditation upon the Deities and the like. The difference between the *Aranyaka* and the *Brahmana* is that the former implies the use of only one factor, namely the mind. The latter, on the other hand, requires several factors like materials, wife, priests, etc. Even when the rituals become impracticable, meditative life would not. This is the advantage. Thus the *Aranyaka* phase answered the special needs of old age and retirement.

There was another advantage too. Man is by nature an extrovert. The senses persist in pulling his mind outward. Then involvement with the objects of the world follows. As long as this involvement persists, he will not get any time or opportunity to think of anything higher. The result was that religious thinking and aspirations could not reach their consummation or fulfilment. The entry into the meditative life of the woods brought a great change. It made the thinkers more and more introspective. Their power of concentration and clarity of vision increased manifold. These in turn took them to the transcendental—spiritual—levels of the mind and consciousness. That enabled them to gain direct intuitive glimpses of several spiritual, religious and philosophical truths. These truths gave a new light and inspiration to them and the last section of the Vedas, namely the Upanishads, was revealed as a result. It is the Upanishads, so revealed, that made the finale of the Vedic thinking. Hence, they were called 'the Vedanta,' which is the subject of our talks in these seven days.

Thus Vedanta, you will now know, represents 'the end' of the Vedas in two respect: It was revealed at the end of the Vedic thinking or period. Secondly, the truths it contains represent the completion or finality of the thinking of their authors.

There is a marked difference between the teachings of the Upanishads and those found in the preceding sections. In the preceding sections are mentioned several super-human or celestial powers and deities. In their names and also for specific ends, the Vedic follower is ordained to perform several rituals. *Doing* or *performing of ceremony* or ritual is, therefore, the theme of the first sections. But, in the Upanishadic section, words and commands are quite different and even opposite. The Upanishads enjoin on us the pursuit of knowledge and fulfilment of life. To this end, they reveal a number of truths, all bearing upon God, Soul and the World.

For instance, the Upanishads describe man as a soul immortal, not as a body mortal. The soul, they say, is different from the body. It is a spiritual presence, a transcendental being, unlimited by the body and its conditions and needs. In realizing the true nature of the Soul lies the fulfilment of man's life. That alone will secure for him permanent peace and blessedness. This is the saying of the Vedanta.

The several DOs and DONTs prescribed in the ritual sections earlier are invalidated by the Upanishadic statements. They are replaced by the dictates 'to know and realize' here and now. Thus religious life and its consummation is brought fully within the limits of the present embodied life. Whereas this is not the case with the ritual sections. The rituals are based upon the hopes of a life after death and the attainments therein.

Our way of living, particularly for the present, must be based on the Upanishads, that is on Vedanta. For, that alone is suited to the present conditions. To take to the Vedic way of life would be to bring into vogue the elaborate rituals and ceremonies. These are practically extinct now. Besides, we know what the benefits they could bestow ultimately are. In the language of the Vedas themselves, as found in the last section—Vedanta—the rituals and their fruits are of no ultimate good. Ultimate good must come from the knowledge of Truth, of the Soul. Thus, it is obvious that we should cling to the Vedantic way of living, not to the other.

A question may come up now: Vedanta does not mention any DOs or DONTs, I said. But does it mean that no performance of any kind is implied in the Vedantic teaching ? Will Vedantic knowledge and realization come to any one without any effort ? If an effort is necessary, of what nature is it ?

What I mean to say is that Vedanta or the Upanishads, do not teach man by means of injunctions or prohibitions, as does the *karma kanda.* On the other hand, it informs man about some truths which he does not know at present—knowledge, he is made to exert himself for for the realization of the Self. Of course, a sadhana or an effort is necessary for this. Vedanta also prescribes it.

The sadhana chiefly consists of *Vichara* or knowledge, not only in the Vedantic realm but in all others as well. Knowledge is something which dawns within our body. It rises in us as a result of the knowledge-producing mechanism exerting for the purpose. Thinking is the nature of such exertion. Thinking is done by the mind, in the consciousness. How can you make the mind exert ?

Not by shaking or agitating the body. When you begin to think, the mind exerts and the exertion persists until the thinking is dismissed. Therefore, what Vedanta does is to make you think properly and consistently. The lines in which the thinking should be done are shown in different Upanishads. The many enquiries found in the Upanishadic treatises are intended to induce in you the necessary thinking for realization.

A question may be raised here: Vedanta is a system of thought developed thousands of years ago, when the world was not as civilized as now and when there was no scientific advancement at all. During the years that have *passed since,* the world and mankind have changed and progressed a great deal. In view of this, how can the ancient findings be applied to the modern world and life ? Why should the present man be urged to accept and act upon what existed in the long past ? Will it not be incongruous to base our present life upon such an old doctrine or system as Vedanta ?

I shall answer this question, which is quite pertinent. No such incongruity can be there in the sphere of Vedanta. The world has progressed greatly and we now have a great measure of civilization too. But all this has not touched the core of man, our inside. It cannot either. Has man been able to add any new part or unit, outer or inner, to himself ? Do you have any more than the ancient five senses ? What part, which is in you now, did the ancient Vedic seer lack ? The mind and the conditions it produces, are they not just the same as ages ago ?

As long as the structure and constitution of man, thus, remains constant and changeless, how can you think of any incongruity in relation to the ancient Vedantic teachings? The incongruity, I agree, could be there, if Vedanta were a science dealing with the objects and the objective world. But Vedanta is not that. It is the result of the search conducted upon a subject. It speaks of the subject—man, his needs, conditions and ideals. These have always remained uniform. As long as this basic fact is there, no one can ever dismiss Vedanta as *out of tune* or useles. Any thought of 'incongruity' about Vedanta is, therefore, immature and unintelligent. The practical and beneficial nature of Vedanta will, as far as I can think, be felt by mankind at all times.

Before concluding, I must tell you about the nature of knowledge dealt with in the Vedas, more particularly in the Upanishads. For that, you must first know the nature of knowledge available to us ordinarily.

Our body contains an aggregate of five senses. There is no portion of the body which does not carry one sense or the other. These senses are the first and foremost agencies for bringing knowledge to us. We look around and then see a number of objects. In doing so, it is the eye that aids us, that acts as the instrument for knowing the existence of objects. In the same, way, we hear sounds, smell odours, feel tastes and contact touch using the respective senses.

The *sensations* thus had, the knowledge thus gained by means of the senses is the basis for our knowing and judging the world's existence, nature, features, etc. This knowledge is categorised as *pratyaksha,* empirical. *Aksha* means eye, and *pratyaksha* denotes the things which exist before or in front of the eye, and in general meaning in front of all the senses. *Pratyaksha,* therefore, implies 'sensoriness'.

With the *pratyaksha* knowledge thus gained as the basis, we go on thinking, codifying, correlating and finally inferring matters, using the mind for the purpose. Inference thus becomes another means of knowledge for us. It is a category distinct in itself and differing from the *pratyaksha.* This category is called *paroksha,* which term denotes 'above the sensory range', 'not sensable'. For example, suppose a man stands in front of you. His body becomes *pratyaksha* for you. Its colour and features can be known by your senses. But his mind is not *pratyakskha.* If at all you have to understand his mind, it has to be through the *paroksha* means. That is to say, you can judge the nature and quality of his mind on listening to his words, and perhaps by looking at his facial expressions.

The *pratyaksha* and *paroksha,* these are the only two means of knowledge available for man. Whatever is there within the range of *pratyaksha,* our senses would be competent to know. Again, if there is anything which can possibly be inferred, then our intellect would do the job for us. On this basis, what is the importance of Vedic or Vedantic knowledge ?

Vedanta does not interfere with our *pratyaksha* knowledge, or the capacity of the senses to effect it. Even if it does, we are not compelled to accept the interference. For example, suppose the Vedas say that fire is cold. Can we accept the statement? About the *paroksha* knowledge also, Vedanta does not say anything contrary. On the other hand, as you have already noticed, Vedantic enquiries closely follow the lines of reason and inference.

What then is the contribution of Vedanta, in terms of the kind of knowledge it reveals ? Vedanta speaks of a third category of knowledge, which is neither *pratyaksha* nor *paroksha.* It is something quite *direct, sudden, immediate,* for those who can gain access to it, who can evolve themselves to that level. The spiritual truths relating to our life, the soul in the body, etc., revealed in the Upanishads, belong to this third category, called *aparoksha.* That is why they become quite important and valuable. Being *aparoksha* in nature, we stand no chance to come by them in the ordinary course of our life.

Will you, for instance, ever know that there is a soul in your body, immortal and blissful by nature ? Again, will you realize so soon that the God, whom you fervently worship, has no form or shape ? That he is really immanent and transcendant at the same time ? Everything, including yourself, is His manifestation. And so, to find him you have to search within your own body, not outside. All these truths the Vedic seers enlivened in their transcendental states by gaining access to the *aparoksha* sphere.

What is the purpose of the Vedas revealing these *aparoksha* findings to us ? It is too obvious. Mankind is always after attaining peace, joy and contentment. To gain a true knowledge of everything possible is also their avowed ideal. The Vedic thinkers, who too were human as we ourselves are, knew about this fact. Hence, they thought it necessary to divulge the truth about the innate divinity of man. In the realization of the Self they found a full solution to all their mundane problems, agitations and doubts. The knowledge of Self gained for them is the best fulfilment of life. It was but natural that they bequeathed their attainment to those that were to follow them on earth. The sum total of all their teachings you can find in the following verse:

नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानां
एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान्।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः
तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषां ॥

All things in the world are ephemeral. But there is something non-ephemeral in them all. You must search for it in the sentient things, not in the insentient ones. It is truly the *chetana* (consciousness), manifest in the conscious entities. It is, though single, capable of fulfilling the desires of the multitude. Whoever is able to realize That, seated in himself, is the truly wise. To him alone will flow abiding peace, not to others.

Again:

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति।
न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ॥

If you realise it here and now, your life becomes true, meaningful. If indeed you fail to, great will be your loss.

To summarise the position, Vedas are a valuable source of knowledge for us. Their one aim is to inform man rightly, to provide him with the necessary knowledge. In doing so, they fulfil their purpose. When man is told of the source from which he can derive peace, salvation and fulfilment, what more remains to be done? It is for him, the lover of knowledge, to learn the lessons, gain knowledge and then act according to it. When he does so, his life will be fulfilled, as were the lives of our ancient Rishis.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

2nd day's talk: *23rd Feb. 1970*

WHAT IS LIFE ?

Yesterday we discussed the origin and progress of Vedic thinking. We also discussed how it ended finally in Vedanta. The Vedas embody two main sections or parts. The first is popularly called *Karma Kanda* (ritual section). In it, the exhortation is *to do* and *not to do*. In other words, the *karma kanda* gives a number of injunctions (*vidhis*) *and* prohibitions (*nishedhaas*). The second section is called *gyana kanda* (wisdom section). In it, the exhortation is different; it is *to know* and *to realize*.

The *gyana kanda* or Vedanta, being one dealing with the pursuit of wisdom, consists mostly of questions and answers. Because, questioning is the method to reach knowledge. The Upanishads first of all pose questions, for which sometimes picturesque settings are provided. For instance, the Mundaka Upanishad begins with a question put by Sounaka, a householder, to Angiras, a Sage. The question runs thus:

कस्मिन् नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वं इदं विज्ञातं भवतीति ॥

Kasmin nu bhagavo vijnathe sarvam idam vijnatham bhava-thi-ithi

> "O Lord, by knowing what will the entirety of the universe become known ?"

Sounaka's enquiry is about the truth of the entire creation. He wants to know what the universe is made of. The present is a scientific age. Our advancement in the field of science has been very great. Recently our men have been to the planet Moon. Being so, you may wonder what meaning does Sounaka's question have, especially to the students of modern science.

What is the extent of the uinverse and space? Has it been measured ? And can it be ever ? I doubt. We have gone to the Moon, no doubt. But can we go to the Sun ? If even we can, are there not several crores of other planets in the space ? Will it be possible for us to reach all of them and beyond, and then get to know what each is made of ? So, a study of the whole universe as it is, will, by its very nature, be unfeasible. What then is the method to fulfil our quest for knowledge ? We need a short-cut, just as we require the medium of a mirror to see our own face. This short-cut for knowing the entirety of the universe is what Sounaka seeks to know from the Sage.

In answer to Sounaka's question, Angiras first of all speaks of the two categories of knowledge, *para* (superior) and *apara* (inferior). By passing *apara,* he soon comes to the *para vidya,* which alone, he says, has the power to redeem man from mortality, fear and miseries He also instructs the house-holder about the methods leading man to the *para* knowledge and thereby to the realization of the immortal Self.

In the Kathopanishad the setting is entirely different. It begins with the beautiful dialogue between the young Nachiketas and Yama, the God of Death. Nachiketas, cursed by his father, goes to Yama and seeks instruction about the truth of the life after death. For this purpose he puts the following question:

येयं प्रते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये
अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ॥
एतत् विद्यां अनुशिष्टस्त्वयाहं ॥

Yeyam prethe vichikitsya manushye
astheethyeke naayamastheethi chaike
Ethat vidyaam anushishtah thwayaaham ||

Meaning: With regard to the death of people, there is this doubt lingering in the minds of thinkers: Some say life survives, while some hold that it does not. I would like to know the truth about this, instructed efficiently by you in the matter.

Yama first of all tests the earnestness and tenacity of the young boy. Thereupon, he proceeds to disclose the Atma Vidya, which has the power to bestow immortality and fulfilment upon the human race.

The typical enquiry of the Kenopanishad is a contrast to both these. The Kena enquires "What instigates the mind to think of objects ?

What is the power enabling the eye to see, the ear to hear, the mouth to speak ? By way of answers to these questions, the Upanishad points out that the omniscient and omnipresent God reigns within the body as the Soul. He is the one Universal Cause and Power beneath all activities and manifestations. Truly the Deity is he, and not the idols that people are prone to worship.

Thus, all the Upanishadic treatises are in the form of questioning or enquiry. For, by that means alone can the realm of Reality be safely reached. Whatever the starting point of the question or enquiry, all Upanishads reach the same destination, arrive at the same Truth, that is the Self within ; the Brahman existing everywhere. Although intuitive and revelatory in nature, the Upanishadic accounts are based fully on reason and logic. This is a clear departure from the earlier sections of the Vedas.

The thinkers, it is true, were religious, emotional and fearful in the beginning. But they soon out-grew these traits, and towards the end you find them greatly logical, confident and courageous. Thus, Vedas, though begun with religion, clearly end in philosophy. This is a rare feature, perhaps not found in the other religions. In the same way, though life after death and the concern therefor find ample mention in the earlier portions of the Vedas, in the end they are utterly ignored and the present life, its pursuit and fulfilment alone are considered. This makes Vedanta fully practical.

Philosophy, as you know, is a science of knowledge. It is also the enquiry into the Ultimate Truth or Reality. But is Vedanta philosophical, you may ask. Yes, it is. In Vedanta you will find the pursuit of Knowledge and Reality, both alike. The reason for the Vedic thinkers to develop a philosophical insight is quite obvious.

They looked at the world carefully, and found that every content of it was subject to constant change. This was so with regard to their own bodies and minds. They then wondered: How can the world remain changeful without being backed by something changeless ? What is here changeless then ? Where does it abide ? They pursued these questions *to the last* until they found a full answer.

Their enquiry was at times *objective,* as you find in the Mundaka. At other times it was subjective, as is the case in the Katha. But in both cases, they ended in the subject ; they found themselves in the subjective realm. For they realized that the *object* was itself a revelation or a making of the *subject*. A verb, which denotes an action, first presupposes the subject, and then alone the object. The subject was, in their view, the first to be thought of. The object had to depend upon the subject. Thus the *subjectiveness* of Vedantic thinking and finding became their uniqueness. Being subjective in nature, Vedanta can suffer no change or replacement in the march of time and civilization. That is how you find Vedantic philosophy as fresh today as it ever was.

By being subjective and changeless in nature, Vedanta does not in the least become impractical or non-beneficial. The benefits which Vedantic realization gains for man are too obvious: peace, stability, wisdom and contentment. What more than these will man require for the fulfilment of his life on earth ?

You now know why Vedanta consists of questions and answers. You can also understand how the question "What is life" becomes an enquiry relevant to Vedanta. We shall take up this question and discuss it in such a manner that we may reach the realm of the Spirit, of the Reality, of the Self and of the Almighty.

'Life' is a word used to denote the state of living. We speak of living only in relation to an embodied thing, a thing with a body. In terms of the body and its existence, what is life or the state of living ? Life or living is the duration of existence between the birth of the body and its death or fall. Again, it is the duration in which the body remains erect and active. The difference between a living man and a dead man is, as all of you know, that the body of the former can be erect and active, while the latter's *will not.*

What makes the body erect ? When does it lose the power to be active and erect ? We know that on death the body lies flat, unable to move or breathe. This leads us to conclude that there is something within the body due to the power of which it is enabled to move and work. What is that indwelling power or thing ?

You may perhaps wonder how one can proceed with such an enquiry without the aid of all objective experiments, laboratory and instruments ? But this is the fact about it. The entire religious pursuits, and so too all philosophical enquiries, are purely subjective and internal in nature. There is no question of making use of any external instrument, nor any second factor, for them. The only medium available is man's personality, with all the components in it. You can employ your senses, and then the mind, intellect, etc. situate within the body. As I already said, the *pratyaksha* sphere of knowledge is the factor first available to you. Gaining that as much as possible, you should go on introspecting, analysing and inferring. You can culture your discriminative power as best as you can. And that will help you to resolve all your problems. This is how any philosophy, more so the Vedantic one, proceeds to fulfil the needs of man.

This being the case, it is clear that the answer to the question "What is life" must be within our reach because of its subjective nature. Let us proceed to think about the matter in terms of simple reason, on the basis of our day-to-day experience, guided by the sense of discrimination at all times.

'Live' is a verb, living being its derivative. Any verb becomes so because it denotes an action. An action, in turn, implies the presence of an actor, who causes that action. The causer of the action is the *subject concerned*. In other words, the subject is that source from which or whom the action proceeds or emanates. The action, so emanating, may also imply the presence of an object. The object is the thing or factor acted upon. It is the source towards which the action flows. Thus the action connects the subject and the object remaining as it were in the middle. It works out the sequence between the subject and the object.

On this basis, think for a moment whether the subject and the object, involved in an action, can ever be the same. Evidently not. Only because they are different from each other, an action becomes possible. Take, for instance, the case of your seeing the wall in front of you. Or look at me sitting on the platform here. You are the seer or the looker, the subject of the action, namely 'seeing'. The wall you see is the object. Or say, I, who is being seen by you, am the object. Is not the wall separate from you? And so too am I. Thus the object and the subject are always clearly separate from each other.

The subject is called the '*vishayi*' or '*karta*', and the object the '*vishaya*' or '*karma.*' *The vishayi-vishaya bheda* (the separate nature of the subject and the object) is a truth universally accepted. Apply this truth, this common rule, to the subject of our life or living. Then you will be able to reach at the truth of Vedanta.

Your body, which is involved in the process of living, is just an object. The subject is something else; it is different from the body. Why so? It is so for the reason that the body is a you, as is the wall. The same eyes with which product, an object, seen by you, experienced by you see the wall or my body, see *your body too.* Thus the seeing is common in both. The fact of 'being seen', or 'is seen', is true of the body as it is of the wall. If then the wall is an object on the ground that it 'is seen', then is not your body too a similar object? Is not the body *seen* by you?

The body is an object. What then is its subject? If the body is the seen, what is the seer? Where-from does the 'seeing' emanate? What in you effects the action called seeing? The search should not be a difficult one, for it is all a matter relating to yourself, taking place within your own body.

You often say 'my body'. What does this expression signify? 'My' or 'mine' is the possessive of 'I'. So, the body, according to your own present understanding, belongs to you, to the 'I' in you. This 'I' is obviously different from the body. For, what you characterise as 'my' or 'mine' cannot be the 'I'. Take the case of a pen you hold and write with. You speak of it as 'my pen'. Is it not different from you? In the same way, you, about which you speak as 'my', must be different from you. Only when you are prepared to refer to the pen as 'I' you have a right to think of the body as yourself.

Thus, a little examination, on the basis of the distinction between the subject and the object, will instantly convince you of the presence of a subject, namely the 'I', within the body. It is this 'I' that remains encased, as it were, in the body and constantly makes use of it, as long as embodied life lasts. Vedanta, thus, proceeds on a purely subjective enquiry for finding out the Ultimate Reality or Truth. It is all quite simple, direct and convincing too.

The body lies dead, inert and inactive, when the 'I' ceases to manifest in it. As you, the holder of the pen, make use of it, so it is that 'I', the holder of the body, that activates and empowers it. Being so, a study of the 'life' in the body, an enquiry into our living, is really a study of the subjective presence in the body, denoted by the term 'I'.

Let us now find out what this 'I' we so much speak of is. If it is not the body, as we have found, what else can it possibly be ? We generally speak of the mind, existing within the body and functioning variously. Is the 'I' the mind then ? No, it is not. Because, we refer to the mind in the same way as we refer to the body. About the mind too, do you not say 'my mind' ? This statement makes it clear that the mind too is an object, and hence it is different from you, as it the body. There are moments when you say 'my mind is not happy, it is agitated.' What does such a statement signify ? The unhappiness is of the mind ; it relates to it, not to you in truth. But for your association with the object, the mind, the unhappiness would not be felt at all. As the disease of the body belongs to the body, the unhappiness of the mind belongs to the mind. The same can be said with regard to the intellect too. (In fact, intellect, mind, etc. are all one thing in substance. They are different only when viewed in terms of their functions.)

What do you understand now ? The 'I' in every one is the *subject* of his personality. Everything else—the body, mind, etc.—is the object, as much as is the wall you look at or the pen or pencil you hold and write with. This finding is not merely one of reason. It is also the direct experience of all. Otherwise how could even a boy say my mind', etc. ? Truth does not keep away from us always. It does reveal now and then. It is we who always fail to take note of it.

While it is true that all of us refer to the 'I' as distinct from everything else, we also confuse the 'I' with the body and mind, thereby intermixing the subject and object. This is how you say 'I am hungry'. You know clearly that hunger is a condition produced by the stomach and as such it belongs to it. If you have no stomach' you can have no hunger too. Despite this fact, you always say 'I am hungry', thereby imposing the body on your 'I' and giving it the status of the subject. Thus, as Sankara puts it, the people in the world are labouring under a basic, congenital confusion about their own identity, about the 'I' in them. They are intermixing truth and untruth (*sathyaanrithe-mithuneekrithya*). This intermixing or confusion, you may say, is the basis for all our activities in the world. The spiritual effort or the Vedantic *sadhana* is aimed at resolving this intermixing, clearing this confusion, and thereby enabling the *sadhaka* to gain a direct glimpse of the 'I' in him.

To take up the enquiry further: I said that Vedanta is a logical analysis of the world and its contents. The world, as it is sensed by us, is fleeting, changeful. The same is the case with our own existence, our personality. Immediately a question comes up: How can anything change by itself? A thing, whether it is in a state of rest or in a state of activity, cannot change its state or course, unless a second factor acts upon it. This is a common law. On this basis, the changeful world must have a definite cause beneath it. So too, our personality, consisting of the body, mind, etc., must be changing due to some distinct indwelling cause. This cause, the ultimate, must be itself changeless. It must have the self-derived power to resist all changes to itself, while causing changes everywhere to all other things.

Another basic truth is that no change, of any kind or order, can become visible except when studies in relation to a changeless factor or base.

The growth and changes of the body are understandable to you, to the 'I' in you. For, every one says 'I was healthy, but now I have become thin and weak'. The childhood in you vanished and youth or old age has taken its place. But the 'I' has not vanished or got replaced in the process. So also the mind is put to varying conditions. The three basic states of waking, sleep and dream also come and go alternately. In spite of all these, the 'I' remains intact witnessing and correlating these phenomena. Examining thus our own day-to-day experiences and conditions, we are able to understand the changeless and constant nature of the 'I'. It always remains as the subject eternal, making use of all components in our personality as its objects. Thus, the distinctness of the 'I' and its changelessness, become quite evident for us. Let us now relate this fact of direct experience with the Vedantic reasoning about the world, its changefulness, etc., and see what conclusions we can arrive at.

Through reasoning and inference the truth that the changeful world must have a changeless base has been clearly recognized. On examining our own being, we are able to realize that there is a changless base in ourselves, namely the 'I'. Therefore, reasoning and direct experience both agree mutually and thus the Vedantic truths declared in the Upanishads are confirmed. The Atma (Self), as Kathopanishad puts it, is the sole cause of every thing. It is the one eternal base or substratum for the entire world. It dwells in the body, animating and activating it variously. Consciousness (pure and unmodified) is the other name for this *Atma*.

The position of the 'I' has become quite clear. It is the changeless thing in us. But what is it exactly? For us the 'I' denotes nothing more than an idea or a unit of understanding. To think of it as anything more is not feasible. How then to locate the 'I' and get to know its *substance*? This is the question that comes up next.

True, the 'I' is a unit of knowledge, a certain idea. Where do all ideas and knowledge emerge from? What is the source of them all? Evidently, the source is within the body.

We find that inert things like rock, dry wood, glass and the like do not give expression to knowledge of any visible kind. Only animate things, things beaming with life and activity (in the ordinary meaning of the term) manifest knowledge. The inference is, therefore, simple. The expression of knowledge is to be ascribed to the thing which animates the body, to that which abides in the body enlivening and activating it variously. In other words, the animating power or spirit, not the animated body or matter, is the source of knowledge. It is thus that living bodies, or say, live beings, become knowledge-repositories. That is to say, knowledge is revealed and expressed *by the life* in the body, by the subjective presence within it.

What is that subjective presence, which we call life ? It is the *consciousness,* which Vedanta calls '*chetana*', '*prajna*', etc. This *chetana* is a thing which is neither matter nor energy. Being other than energy and matter, it is called *the spirit,* or the spiritual substance. To cause knowledge and activity is its power. The moment the *chetana* ceases its operation in the body, both activity and knowledge also cease abruptly.

The 'I', being an idea or a form of knowledge, must be emerging from the same source, the consciousness within the body. Like waves and ripples on water, strokes of knowledge, as it were, emerge on the surface of consciousness. Hence, the attempt to understand the source or substance upon which it abides, by which it is caused. As light from fire, the 'I' too that emerges from the consciousness is the root cause of everything that takes place during our life-time. It is as well the changeless base in us, which reneders all changes, inner and outer, noticeable. An enquiry into life is, therefore, an enquiry into the 'I', which in turn becomes an enquiry into the changeless consciousness, the eternal cause and witness of everything occurring in the world around as well as within us.

This is how Vedanta develops the enquiry 'What is life', and takes it to the shores of the Ultimate Reality.. Blessed seekers, you should be bold, persistent and straight-forward in your search, in your spiritual learning. Take up this subjective enquiry, and you will easily be led to the realm of the Spirit, the abode of peace, immortality and fulfilment.

In a verse, Sankara clearly points out the nature and expression of the Atma. To commit this verse to your memory will be to your advantage:

आयातासु गतासु शैशवमुखावस्थासु जाग्रन्मुखासु
अन्यास्वप्यखिलासु वृत्तिषु धियो दुष्टास्वदुष्टास्वपि ।
गंगाभंगपरंपरासु जलवत् सक्षानुवृक्षात्मनः
तिष्ठत्येव सदा स्थिराहमहमित्येकात्मता साक्षिणः ।

Ever since birth, the body has passed through a number of stages like childhood, boyhood, etc. The mind too is passing through wakefulness, sleep and dream, almost daily. The *buddhi* (the *chetana*) produces a number of conditions or reactions called good and bad, soothing and painful, etc. Thus, it is a chain of changes that persists in our being outside and inside. Yet, there is one thing, the witness of all these changes, which remains ever steady, as does the water in the flow of Ganges. This witness reveals itself in the form of 'I'. O man, you are really this ever-steady 'I', the Self, not the unsteady media like the body, mind, etc.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

3rd day's talk: *24th Feb. 1970*

KARMA YOGA, the Science of Work

Our talk today will be on Yoga in general and Karma Yoga in particular. But before going into the subject, let me give you a few more points which will make your understanding of Vedanta firmer and Vedantic *sadhana* clearer.

A study of life took us yesterday to the changeless 'I', to the changeless substratum—the *chetana*—in the body. This 'I', a wave on the water of consciousness, qualifies itself to be the Reality for the reason it remains changeless. For the definition of 'the real' is 'the changeless thing'.

The *chetana* or consciousness upon which 'I' persists is not limited in any respect. It is all-pervading. As it permeates the body throughout, it also pervades the whole of the world and all the things in it. As Krishna describes it, it is *avinasi* (indestructible):

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततं ।
विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित् कर्तुमर्हति ।।

Avinasi thu thad-vidhdhi Yena sarvam idam thatham
Vinaasam-avyayasyaasya Na kaschit karthum arhathi

Meaning: "Know the thing, which permeates everything here (in the world) to be indestructible. None indeed can cause its destruction."

As I told you already, to travel through the entire universe and then examine every existing with a view to finding out what pervades or permeates it, is impossible for us. Such an attempt is, by its very nature, beyond our scope. But the search into our own being or personality lies strictly within our power Krishna uses the singular number (*avinasi*) while referring to the thing which permeates the the whole world. That means there is altogether only one thing permeating the objects of the world. Our body is one of these objects. What is found permeating our body must, hence, be permeating all things in the world. It becomes the all permeator, the all-pervading factor, *sarvya-vyapi*

Further, our present experience clearly shows that the consciousness in us is changeless To be changeless is to be devoid of destruction. Thus, we have traced the *avinasi*. It is within our own body. Let this truth be understood clearly.

What do we aim at in our life ? What for do we generally work ? Life for all, is a continuous stream of experience. *To experience* is the very nature of our life. Experience denotes an action, and hence it implies a subject and an object. 'I', we know, is the subject always. The objects alone vary each time. The subject 'I' is made to unite itself with the object every time an experience takes place. Such union or connection or merger with the object is what constitutes our life or living for us. In other words, every living human is making an attempt throughout his lifetime to unite himself with one object or another. This *attempt* at *union* will prevail as long as our life lasts.

The five senses are the first medium in gaining experience for us. What do they do ? The eye sees, the ear hears, the nose smells, the tongue tastes and the skin touches. They do all these not by themselves but in conjunction with their respective objects. Thus, any sensation implies a union. When you see an object or a person, you are in fact gaining *a union* with that object or person. When you hear a person talk, you are again having *a union* with him. The former is through the eye, and the latter through the ear. This is the difference. Similar is the case when the other senses work. The same truth also holds good when the mind works. The mind effects the union by thinking, through thoughts. I should say, even when you sleep there is a union implied. It is in the level of nescience, unconsciousness. The idea is that our life every time aims at 'union' of one kind or another and that it also involves one union or another, every time.

But what happens ? What is the fate of the unions we are able to gain in our life ?

The things of the world, with which we get united each time, are evanescent. Hence, the result obtained by us does not last long. As the things change themselves, so also the joy or fulfilment which they render passes off. Thus, while we succeed in gaining union, we do not succeed in attaining joy and fulfilment. In the normal course of life and effort this fate cannot be altered. That is why we are compelled to think of Vedanta or Yoga and its pursuit in order to fulfil ourselves, in the process deriving peace and contentment.

Yoga is a Sanskrit word. It means 'union'. The word is also used to denote the path or means leading to the ideal of 'union'. It has thus a double meaning.

The need for obtaining union is not, as I have said already, anything unusual for us, because our life is itself a process of union. The unusualness comes, if at all, when we intend to get at such a union which will last for ever. Such an everlasting union will be unlike all the others. Before attempting to obtain it, we must know about the existence of the changeless thing in the world. After knowing where it abides and what its nature is, we should try to gain union with it. Then the joy or happiness resulting therefrom will endure for ever. Is there such a possibility — this is, therefore, the question before us.

The presence of a changeless base is already noticed by us. It is within our own body. It is the 'I' in us. So we can safely try to get at *its union*. If we become successful, then our fate will be peaceful and blessed. Else, not. As the object we aim at is within the body itself, there is no reason why we should fail in our effort. If the object was outside, then failure is almost certain. But now it cannot be.

So, the word Yoga signifies the union with the indestructible 'subject' in ourselves, the union with the 'real'. It also connotes, in the other aspect, the path which will lead us towards this union (*Yoga*).

How many paths are there ? In what way do they differ from each other ? To quote a verse from the Gita:

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्मन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना
अन्ये सांख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥

Dhyanena aatmani pasyanthi
Kechid-aatmaanam aatmana
Anye sankhyena yogena
Karma-yogena chapare

Krishna here speaks of three paths leading one to the union with the Self, with the indestructible. Dhyana is one. *Vichara,* called here *sankhya,* is another. *Karma Yoga* is the third—what we are discussing today.

The need for taking to the practice of yoga is, I think, quite clear to you all. What should be the path ? As you can find, in the three paths mentioned by the Gita, Karma Yoga is included.

Karma means action, or better, activity. Activity of any kind and order is *karma*. *Karma Yoga* signifies that path wherein *karma* itself is the medium employed for the *sadhana*. '*Karma* itself is the *yoga*' (meaning the path)—this is the meaning of *karma yoga*. This implies that you have to use the karma you involve yourself in from time to time as the means for gaining your end. The end, as you already know, is the 'union' with the Real, the *avinasi*, which denotes the *chetana* animating your body—the water upon which the 'I' wave subsists.

Why should the question of using our *karma* for doing the *sadhana* arise? Is there any specific purpose in taking *karma* as the means?

There is a clear reason for it. *Karma* is inevitable for all living beings, more so for mankind. Remember the definition of life I gave you. Life is a state of activity of the body. If activity thus is the factor which represents our life, if our life is identical with 'activity,' *karma* becomes the most significant part of our life. Its inevitability alone is sufficient for us to accept and regard it as supreme. See what Krishna says in the Gita:

न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥

Na hi kaschit kshanam api
Jaathu thisthathyakarma-krit
Kaaryathe hi-avasah karma
Sarvah prakrithijaih gunaihi

(Meaning: None can remain without doing activity even for a second. All beings are irresistibly made to be active by the *gunas* of *Prakriti.*)

About the Kurukshetra war, which Arjuna was reluctant to fight, Krishna said:

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा ।
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात् करिष्यस्यवशो हि तत् ॥

Swabhaavajena Kountheya
Nibadhah swena karmana
Karthum nechasi yan-mohaat
Karishyasi-avaso hi thath

Every one born in the world brings with him a certain nature. It represents the aggregate of some specific tendencies and features. It is called 'swabhava.' The word signifies that such nature is inseparable from its possesser. Being inseparable and self-assertive, man cannot leave it. Nay, it will not leave him. It will dominate man through and through. Hence Krishna says: "You are bound by your own nature, O Arjuna. So, even if you, out of ignorance, do not like to do a certain act, you will be compelled to perform it, any way."

Thus, it becomes quite obvious that no one in the world can escape the hold of *prakriti* and hence the propulsion for doing *karma*. *Karma* is one with us, with our life.

Let us look at it in another way. You will agree that the whole world is an expression of Nature. Everything here is born of Nature, moved and guided by it at all times. We are of Nature, we are in Nature. We depend upon Nature in all ways. This Nature, says Vedanta, is composed of three parts, called *Gunas* or evolutes. They are (1) *satwa* (2) *rajas* and (3) *thamas*.

Satwa denotes light and knowledge; *Rajas* activity and the mind's urge for it and *Tamas* rest, sleep, etc. To be under the hold of *prakriti* is to be under the sway of these three *Gunas*. Thus you cannot escape the influence of *satwa*. That is why every man exhibits a tendency to know things, to work for and increase knowledge. It is the urge for gaining knowledge which we spoke of as the distinguishing trait of man, which is the special gift in the humans when compared to the other creatures. Again it is this that makes him a seeker of Truth, of the Ultimate Reality, of God.

In seeking knowledge, spiritual or material, do not think you are becoming any exception to your *naturality*. On the contrary, you are merely conforming to your nature, you are obeying Nature's dictates. What to speak then of the other *guna*, namely *rajas*, in you, the effect of which is to bring about *karma*, activity ?

As is the urge for knowledge, so is the need to work, to manifest *karma*. So you have to be at work, be doing *karma*, always. Closely viewed, gaining knowledge also involves a certain activity. It is a very subtle inner one, of course. Even in sleep, the body and the other parts of your being are at work. Thus, right from the time of birth until the body breathes its last, man is steeped in *karma*. The *karma* may be external, gross or subtle, visible or invisible, or a mixture of these.

Look at what physiology teaches us ? Any living organism has to take food to preserve its life. The subsistence of life implies the use of food. The food taken is converted into sugar and energy. The energy so generated has to be expended and then again replenished. The means of expending energy is 'activity'. In other words, the pursuit of *karma* draws upon the storage of energy. Thus, if you require food, you require activity too.

It is against this background that we have to think of our spiritual or Vedantic ideal. While I accept the ideal of *yoga,* I am at a loss to abandon all the activities of mine with a view to take up its pursuit. To shun your activity fully and then sit in a place exclusively for the practice of meditation is not in tune with your life and nature. Such a 'quiet life', I do not deny any way or describe as impossible. When I speak on meditation, I shall explain this point in detail. But now our purpose is to understand *karma,* its need and place in our life. Then, we also want to know how the *karma* we perform throughout our life can be made a *yoga,* the means for achieving the union with the Imperishable. It is to this end that I am exposing to you the various aspects of *karma*. Surely, in understanding the nature and purpose of *karma,* the secret of *karma yoga* will become clear to you.

So, you can decide to lead the spiritual way of life. You can also hope to achieve its ideal in this very life. But you should ask yourself: "I want to have the union with the indestructible. But for attaining it, I am unable to make any special effort. The effort must be in and through whatever I do in my day-to-day life. The work which my life ordinarily involves must itself be made the *sadhana,* the *yoga* practice, for me. Is there any possibility for this ? If there is, then I shall be successful."

The answer to your question will be a full 'yes'. The entire talk on *Karma Yoga* is to make you understand the technique or secret by which the ordinary work of yours can be transformed into the Vedantic sadhana.

It is thus that we come to discuss and know '*Karma Yoga*' and its application.

By *karma* is meant work of all kinds, religious and secular alike. All kinds of activity are creations of *prakriti*. Religious desire gives rise to religious rituals. Wordly desires give rise to worldly activities. But the moment you clearly grasp the truths of Vedanta and the significance of Vedantic practices, then the difference between religious and secular *karma* will disappear from mind. All *karmas* will become equal for you. *Karma Yoga* will divinise everything you do, thereby displacing the need for doing anything special as religious ritual, worship or the like.

What makes *karma,* a *yoga sadhana* ? This is the question before us now. *Karma,* as it is now performed, is the result of *kama,* desire. One desire or another prompts man to do work, and until it is fulfilled it will be dominating his mind throughout. What is the result then ? Throughout the performance of the *karma* (intended to gain for you the object of your desire) and afterwards, you will be thinking of the desire repeatedly. You will be always watching when and how it is going to be fulfilled. Even if you find that there is scope for gaining the object concerned, worry and agitation will not leave your mind. For, you will be led to think whether the object you gain will be with you for ever or not. As a result, the mind will be agitated to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, the performance of *karma* does not allow us to remain peaceful or joyous. It puts us more to disturbance and agony than otherwise. We have to change this fate. We have to improve upon it. But how ?

First, try to have a clear idea about the place of *karma* in your life. Understand that we are not doing *karma* because of desire alone. Even if there is no desire at all in one's mind, he can be doing work. Rather he must. As long as life subsists for you, you have to be doing work. This is the truth we explained before. Krishna also says in the Gita:

"I have nothing to achieve in this world or in the other. Still I keep on working, O Arjuna."

This makes the truth clear that, even in the absence of desire, we can and must work wholeheartedly. It is possible and necessary. If to be working is an irresistible universal law of nature, any thought of violating it is wrong and foolish. Once you have grasped this basic truth about *karma*, then the entire *karma yoga* becomes easy, meaningful and practicable for you.

Let us then be complying with Nature's law. Let us be doing work always, as long as is necessary and possible, and let us be thinking in the process that we are conforming to Nature, fulfilling Nature's needs. Thus doing *karma* must become a thing natural, usual and effortless for us.

If *karma* is thus a thing natural, why should its pursuit put one into trouble or bondage? Bondage results, not because you are doing *karma,* but because you breed a number of harmful elements in your mind. The first mistake you commit is that you do not care to understand the 'why' of *karma.* The other is that you relate *karma* to the *karma phala,* thereby considering that the fruition of *karma* will alone make you happy. In other words, you are prepared to regard *karma* as having fulfilled its purpose only when the result you expect thereof comes up. If it does not, then you lose heart. The point I am trying to drive home is very delicate, so I want you to be very attentive in grasping it.

I do agree that any *karma* must accomplish for us its *phala,* the result. Only then its performance becomes justified. But I have to ask you: "Will not a *karma* bring its destined fruit, when rightly performed ?" What do you mean by a *karma* ?

It is a kind of activity, may be of the body, of the mouth or of the mind, which has the aim of gaining a certain end. Any *karma* is a means to achieve a specific end. It is a cause intended to produce a definite effect. This would mean that it is in the very nature of *karma* to bring its result. If this be so, why should we worry about any *karma* we perform not bearing its result at all ?

I understand that there are some other sides also to the question. Even when *karmas* are rightly performed, at times they do not bring the expected results. It is but natural. The failure may be due to several causes. Some of the causes rest with you, but some do not. You, the performer, can only at best exert yourself maximum and complete the work in hand. Yet, there may be deficiencies. They may be due to lack of proper health on your part, lack of intelligence, experience, etc. Besides, there is always a chance for error. To err is quite human.

With all that, suppose, for argument's sake, you have fulfilled your part without loopholes, even then failure may occur. The expected result may not appear. Because the entire life and activity of the humans presuppose the close co-operation of two basic factors: one is the *human himself* and the other *providential*. Of them, even the human is not totally within your power to correct, alter or fulfil. What then about your control over the non-human, the providential ? Thus, every piece of *karma,* clearly involves a chance for producing (1) no outcome at all (2) an adverse outcome and (3) a partial outcome. These are evident in the fields of agriculture and medicine.

Even when an agricultural crop is well nursed and brought up, pests at times badly affect it. Drought, too, befalls quite unexpectedly. Then, the efforts will not achieve fruition at all, by or only partial fruition. To speak of medicine and treatment, even the best doctors are found to err in their diagnosis. There are instances where the most reputed medical men have blundered, thereby causing the death of patients. These are ample facts to convince any one that there always lies a gap, which cannot be filled by man, between the performance of a *karma* and its fruition.

By saying this, I do not in the least mean that it is wrong to expect the desired result of any *karma*. Far from that. In fact, I say that all *karmas* must be done to the best of your ability, so that their intended results may be successfully attained. But I will not stop my statement just at that. I wish to follow it up with another statement: that every one should keep a provision in his mind to meet an adverse result, as in medicine, as well as no result or partial result as in agriculture. This is what Krishna speaks in the second chapter of Gita. He says that whether the desired result appears or not, you should try to remain equal-minded. There should not be any sense of frustration or elation in your mind.

Siddhi means fruition and *asiddhi* means non-fruition. In *siddhi* and *asiddhi,* one should learn to be equal-minded and harmonious. Such equalness or harmony is really *Yoga,* the spiritual ideal we have to realize. Here the ideal is presented in its practical aspect. It should not fail to impress your mind. Rather your mind should not fail to grasp it aright.

सिद्धि - असिध्योः समो भूत्वा
समत्वं योग उच्यते ।

Sidhi-asidhyoh samo bhoothwaa
Samathvam Yoga uchyathe

Samatwa is *yoga* itself, this is the statement. Mark it a thousand times. Let its significance sink into your brain and make you truly discerning. There are many *sadhakas* who run here and there, who go to various teachers, who go on practising several kinds of *sadhanas,* for achieving the spiritual ideal. And, alas, they do not succeed too. The reason for it is their not understanding the true goal of spiritual life and pursuit. They do not know where they have to reach, what attainment they have to gain. If you understand aright that the attainment is purely an integral one and that success in it depends fully upon you, the entire fate will be changed. You will no more need to run here and there, to change the form of *sadhana* from this to that. The practice of *samatwa,* as we shall explain now, will impress you sufficiently and you will persist in it for ever and ever.

Let us speak of another principle about the *karma sadhana.* As Krishna himself says, you should not be the lovers of *karma-phalas* (the fruits of karmas). What should you then be ? You should be the lovers of *karma* alone. The point may not be clear to you, or you may even regard it as absurd or meaningless. But it is not so. On the other hand, it is a great principle. It is this trait that makes you a Vedantic *sadhaka.* It is from this that libeartion flows to you.

Obviously there does not arise the question of doing any *karma* without keeping a certain result in view. In fact, it is the result aimed at which goes to shape the *karma.* For instance, you all have come to this hall. Why ? It is for the specific purpose of lisening to me. Suppose the announcement about the talk was not there, there would have been no thought in your mind of coming here. Thus, without a certain end kept in our front, we won't undertake any work at all.

We are sending our children to schools and colleges. The purpose behind it is quite obvious. It has to be in our mind always. It is to win for them education, knowledge and ability. If this purpose is not attained, then it is better to withdraw from that effort, that plan. A student, too, learns and writes the examinations only with the specific object of 'passing' and becoming qualified. Suppose this idea is not there, will he ever work hard ? Can he either ? As the famous proverb itself says:

प्रयोजनमनुद्दिश्य न मन्दोऽपि प्रवर्तते ।

Prayojanam anuddisya na mandopi pravarthathe

> "Even an idiot does not do anything without seeing some purpose ahead."

If this be so, then is it not absurd to argue that we should be doing our work without deciding upon the results to be attained, or without showing due concern for the results ?

Krishna only says: *Maa karma-phala hethuh bhooh.* It means "you should not be one who considers the *results alone* as the cause for doing work". If, in your judgment, the results which the work promises are alone the motive force for undertaking it *and nothing else*—then you will be making a great mistake. Perhaps it is difficult for you to understand the correct significance of what I say. But you must overcome the difficulty and gain perfect understanding of the principle of *karma sadhana.*

To do work, with the avowed *vrata* (*vrata* itself means a vow or sacred principle) of winning some results, and that alone—this is bad indeed. It will not gain for you the realization of any spiritual or Vedantic ideal. I shall tell you why.

What are the results you hope to win, either by religious acts or by secular work ? They are things of the world and no more; things like money, health, following, children, wife, etc., or again heaven, the world of Brahma, (the creator), etc. All these are, as we have seen, fleeting. They have no power to add to you anything monumental or change your own fate of fleetingness. As such, how can anything in the way of the *karmic results* gain for you the spiritual ideal, viz., peace, contentment and salvation ? In the ultimate analysis, the results of all religious and secular *karmas* are not useful for us. The union, *yoga,* with the *chetana* within alone can ensure for you, as has already been shown, freedom and fulfilment. Compared to this *yoga* ideal, of what use and value are the results of *karmas* ?

Even then, can any one avoid doing *karma*? No. That means he cannot also avoid the *karmic* results. In other words, every one, whether he lives the Vedantic way of living or not, has to be subject to 'the law of *karma*', and thereby to 'the law of begetting results' also, no matter whether the results are fleeting or otherwise. To do *karma* and thereby becoming a victim to its result—whatever the result be—this is inevitable. It is this knowledge that you should preserve with regard to the *karmas* you do and the results you are compelled to gain thereby. The cause for your doing *karma* will then be 'not the results.' You will not be one belonging to the *karma—phala-hetu* category. The *hethu* (cause), in your view, for doing work will be the clear knowledge that work is inevitable in the course of life. You will always be feeling that you are a product of *prakriti,* and hence the *gunas* of prakriti will always have their sway upon your being. As long as this is so, you cannot avoid doing work on the one side and thereby enjoying or suffering from its result on the other. The *gunamayatwa* of yours will compel you to do work. And the *gunamayatwa* of the world will make you a heir to the various results thereof.

If this basic lesson is learnt, then the pursuit of *karma sadhana* will become easy and pleasant. What is the practical benefit which one derives by taking to the *karma sadhana* as explained here ? This question must be answered.

The benefit is by no means small. It is so much as to bestow liberation upon the *sadhaka.* A *karma sadhaka* will, when his *sadhana* becomes fulfilled, ascend to the position of *amritha,* an immortal soul. How ?

Karma, by itself, is not a source of menace or bondage. It is the *thoughts* about the results which always agitate, confuse and frighten the mind variously. For you will always have to think "Will the desired result be achieved at all ? When can I achieve it ? Even if achieved, will it remain long enough ? Or will it be disturbed soon ? Will I be able to live long to realize all the joy which the results can bestow ?" These are sufficient to spoil your mind and make it a source of misery. In the normal course, nobody can be *concerned* about the results of the work he does, without getting intensely agitated and worried mentally.

Thus to do work in the ordinary course is to be an object of agony and worry. But if you can always derive consolation from the truth that it is in the nature of any *karma* to bring its result, then this fate can be successfully changed. Suppose you are feeling hungry. You will instinctively walk to the kitchen or the dining hall and then begin to eat. With every morsel of food, your hunger will be getting appeased. Is the result called 'appeasement of hunger' different from the act of taking food? Think for a moment.

Truly, it is not. Similar is the case with every kind of *karma* and the result implied in its performance. Believe me, it is so.

Suppose you take a walk intending to reach a certain destination. With every step, will you not be approaching that point ? Every forward step, that is the *karma* performed, is a partial end or the end realized in part. Thus the means and the end, the *karma* and its result, are only imaginatively different. Really they are the same. It is all a question of time and its passage, the inter-relationship of the past, the present and the future !

When you are taking food, is it necessary for you to think, 'is my hunger getting appeased ? Will the food appease me ? etc. You may think about anything else you want. Even then the intake of food will do its work. It is possible to engage your mind for solving a mathematical problem while you are engaged in taking food.

This is what I have to say about all kinds of work you do during the course of your life. Do not wait for the results to appear and delight you. If you wait so, you are taking a great risk. Because there is nothing in this world which can promise the right fruition of all the *karmas* that you do. The *Sastras,* on the other hand, are replete with various instances wherein the Seers of Truth gave lessons to the seekers to impress upon them (the latter) that at no time in the world have the designs of man been consistently fulfilled, his surmises proved fully correct or his steps borne fruit. On the contrary, even the best thought or designs have on occasions met with failure and the intelligence of even approved men has been questioned.

Ravana thought of winning men with his ten heads and twenty hands. But what happened in the end ? Kamsa was out to kill his nephew. But in the end did not the reverse take place ? This is true not only of the so-called immoral souls like Ravana and Kamsa. The truth holds good also even in respect of great and holy souls. The reason for it is the fact that the body, mind and intelligence with which they are born in the world are limited. And hence they cannot be without imperfections.

Absolute flawlessness should not be given to the humans. If it were given, then they would swell in arrogance and selfishness and find fault with the very pattern of the world, as did Hiranyakasipu of old. The most unimaginable havoc would then be caused by such humans.

So, the conclusion of our discussion so far is that the theory or belief that 'I am doing work simply because I want its results. The results are the things that delight me, so give me enjoyment' is not a correct one. To be thinking so will be to be under an expectation always, the fulfilment of which does not depend upon you or your powers. Again, it involves a delay. For, there will always be a long interval between your doing a *karma* and its producing the result.

Both the expectation and the delay should be avoided. For that, you should develop a new outlook, the spiritual or the Vedantic vision. Such vision will be 'I am doing *karma* because to be so doing is my nature. In conforming to my nature, I find great delight. As the clouds shed rains, as the seasonal wind blows, as the rivers of the mountains flow down to the seas, so is my nature to do *karma*. I cannot but fulfil my nature, my duty. In thus fulfilling my nature discharging my duty, lies my contentment and perfection . It gives me the same joy, nay much more, as would a result give to the result-lover. I am no more an expecter of results, I am no more their lover. I have no doubt that the result will come. It cannot but, and when it comes, who else than I will be there to own it ? At the same time, I also know that sometimes the result will fail me. Even then, I have no trouble or dejection. I own the failure as I do the success. Whatever is due to me, whatever is of me and by me, I accept fully. As is success so is failure too. Both are inevitable. By the very fact that a certain result has taken place, it has to be considered inevitable and then accepted. It is like accepting the colour of the skin with which I am born.'

The change worked out is thus very great. You will no more be doing *karma* with tension, agitation or confusion. The way becomes easy and pleasant for you. You will begin to sport in doing *karma,* as the child plays. While you will be doing *karma* externally, internally you will be deriving your delight too. Thus, the very persuit *of karma,* the mere performance of it, brings for you a joy and contentment which even the right fruitioning of it will not bring in the ordinary course. This is how *karma* and its pursuit rise to the status of Vedantic *sadana.*

Mark the difference between ordinary *karma* and the *karma* done as *yoga,* between *karma* and *karma sadhana.* It is very subtle, but its impact is very great and tangible.

How does the *karma* performed in this new light take the performer to the spiritual ideal as set forth by us ? What, in other words, is the exact nature of the *sadhana* involved in the pursuit of such *karma* ? How can it lead one to the achievement of Sel-knowledge and immortality ?

I shall explain the point. The nature of our mind is such that it is compelled to think variously about the results of whatever *karma* it does. It goes on hoping for the results of its choice. Such thinking and hoping instantly puts the mind to agitations of different kinds. Whenever such agitation is found to persist in you, understand that the *karma sadhana* (*karma yoga*) is not going on. What you have to do then is to bring the *sadhana* to the mind, by making it do *vichara* (*thatwa-vichara*) and allay its own worries and agitations. Make the mind think thus:

"What I want is happiness and contentment. I can have them provided I change my outlook. Instead of the results, which are, if at all, lying far off, let the doing of *karma* itself be the object of my pursuit. Thus, I shall constantly be in the object. This fact will preserve my fulfilment intact.

Suppose a swimmer enters a large tank and begins to swim. He can have two ideals: one to reach the other shore, and the other to keep on swimming, considering that swimming is a pleasant exercise and that it will refresh and delight him. In the former case, he has an aim to realise for which he will have to cover a certain distance by swimming. But in the latter, there is no such distant destination and the thought of reaching it. Suppose he chooses the former ideal, then he is putting himself at a disadvantage. He gets involved in an exertion. And as long as that exertion is not completed and therby the ideal set before is not realized, the swimming (the *karma* he does) will not delight him. But is that the case with the latter ? There you are in your ideal always, for it is to be swimming, not to be in any destination. In so doing, if you so like, you can reach the other shore also, provided you swim in that direction. In that case, you will be doing the same act as in the latter, but with a marked difference. There will be no scope for any involvement in thinking this way or that about the result. Agitation is thereby avoided. This is the advantage.

Thus, the same *karma,* you find, can be a source of agitation and misery, as well as one of delight and fulfilment. What brings about the change is the lack of proper insight or its presence. It is understanding which makes all the difference.

One more point to be mentioned is how to-know whether the *karma sadhana* is correct and is progressing. How can you test it yourself? It may be easy for one to claim that he is a *Karma-sadhaka*. But the claim may be false. If false, it has to be made real. If it is real, then the reality must be preserved. In both cases, you require to make the test.

As I said earlier, the performance of *karma* is generally followed by its result. But there may be delay in the matter. There may at times be a partial realization of the result. Adverse result also may occur. Thus, there is an indefiniteness all through. The result may present itself, but it may be stolen or disturbed very soon. For instance, the much-expected son may be born to you. But a few days after birth, he may fall ill. The child may lose one of the limbs, or some other troubles may arise. Thus, there cannot be any consistency or uniformity in the realization of any result. Where do you stand then?

Your mind will always be swinging between two poles—success and defeat, delight and depression, the thoughts of fruition and non-fruition. This swinging habit is characteristic of all humans, and it will persist unless you do *sadhana* and alter it.

So what should the *karma-sadhana* do? He should always be examining the mind and then making it learn the quality of equalness. By reasoning, by introspection, make the mind accept both the extremes, both possibilities, equally with the same attitude. The mind should regard both as occurrences in the scheme of nature, as things inevitable. If the mind has learned to do what you ask it to, then it will remain unruffled when no result, adverse or partial, (any one of these) faces you. Normally, any of these faces you. Normally any of these (outcomes) will cause a depression, a mood of dislike or repulsion. But a *karma sadhaka* should not be having any of these. For that, he must prepare his mind, should train it in such a manner that even adverse results (and the like) will not act upon it unfavourably.

The *sadhana* does not stop just there. What about the favourable results coming in ? Is it right to be swayed by them and then generate a sense of elation or delight ? That too is not right. It does not behove a *karma yogi*. He should not be moved by the wave of delight as by the wave of depression. Only then the *karma* he does and the results it brings will tend to elevate him spiritually, leading him to the goal of 'union with the Indestructible'.

Yoga, as I told you, is the means of pursuit, or *sadhana*. In *Karma Yoga, karma* is used as the means ; In *bhakti yoga, bhakti* will be the means. And in *gyana yoga, gyana* will be employed as the means.

The *karma yogi* must use his day-to-day *karmas,* all of them, as the medium for doing the *sadhana*. Just as you use the mirror for looking at your own face, here the *karma* must be the medium, the mirror, for you to look at your own within, the Self within. *Karma* done by you will become the mirror when you remove from your mind 'the double attitude' towards it, towards its fruitioning. Such removal cannot be set aside as impracticable for any reason whatever.

This is because the scope for doing the *sadhana* is always there. Will you not be doing *karma* almost always ? Karma grips you by the law of nature. You need not take any trouble for inviting *karma,* for getting hold of it. It will be there with you constantly. And everything that you do is, by its very nature, associated with a certain result. You may succeed or not in achieving this result. The success or otherwise will generally affect your mind in one way or another. If thus all these factors are there around you, then your *sadhana* can also go on safely.

What you should be doing is to watch your mind. Do not allow it to swing this way or that. Give it the right perception, the right spiritual prop. Bridle, reform and refine it by means of *vichara.* Everytime you find that the progress made is not adequate, treat the mind with more and more of *vichara* and more and more of *karma,* too. Make it do various kinds of work. Then watch it, examine it closely. Also give it marks each time assessing its *spiritual quality,* until, you are satisfied that it has scored hundred percent or very near it. For all this, you need *the doing of karma,* physical, oral and mental, and that alone, which is available in abundant measure. Why then should you grumble ? Why lament over lack of time or convenience ? Why plead inefficiency or unintelligence ?

Sanga is a word which finds ample mention in the discussion of *karma.* It is more misunderstood than understood. The word means 'identification.' What does identification denote ?

Suppose you are a bachelor or a *kumari.* In all likelihood, your identification will be with your parents, brothers and sisters. But when you get married, particularly when you have obtained a partner of your marked choice, then the identification either increases or changes. Mostly it changes, in less or more time. Gradually, it extends itself to the husband or wife, and in due course, to the children born of the alliance. And, in time, the previous identification loses its importance to a large measure though not fully. What is the reason for it ? It is all based upon your vision, needs, ideals and the like.

Similar is the case with the *sanga* of the mind in relation to the results of *karma* and then to the *karma* itself. In the normal human mind, it is the results and the thoughts about them that get ingrained. Initially, the mind does not know of any truth other than to do work for getting some results, and then delight over the results when achieved. You may say that it is somewhat akin to the mind of an unmarried boy or girl and the identification it has to the parents and other filial relations. But with the entry into spiritual life, with the adoption of *karma-sadhana* as a means for achieving the spiritual ideal, the vision changes. The mind outgrows its habit fostered until then. A new outlook dawns and the nature and extent of the *sanga* also undergoes transformation. As a result, the significance attached to the *results* (and results alone) gets reduced. It is then turned to the *karma itself* and *its performance.* Performance of *karma* becomes the source of delight, contentment and fulfilment. It is like the changed attitude of the married boy or girl and the new identification entering his or her mind.

The *karma sadhaka* must do all his *karmas* well --"well" here means without allowing himself to be agitated by the thoughts of the results. When the results appear, when they do not, and likewise when any adverse results are met, he must be able to preserve his contentment, the equableness of his mind. "Yes I have done the *karma,* and, as is usual, it has had the destined end. What is there to be joyous or to be moody about ? Every outcome is quite all right for me. If there is any error on my part, I shall try to avoid it next time. In this, my duty is fulfilled Herein lies my contentment. This is my *sadhana.* By identifying myself with the results, at best I can derive delight from them. But, at present, the delight does not wait for the results to appear. It comes from the within, while yet I am doing work. It springs from the equanimity of mind, from the impartial attitude maintained all through, from the removal of identification with the results."

To know whether you carry *sanga* with you, the test-to be applied is, "Does the mind swing this way or that on finding the results ? Does it depend upon the results for getting delight, or is it deriving delight from the very pursuit of *karma* ? Go on applying this test and give your mind marks every time. Then be improving, until you are satisfied about your full success.

The following verse from Gita tells us a very great truth about *karma-sadhana* and its lofty spiritual nature:

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः ।
यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ॥

Na hi deha-bhrithaa sakyam thyakthum karmani-ashethah
Yasthu karma-phala thyagee sa thyagee-thyabhidhee-yathe

Thyaga or renunciation is the highest ideal for mankind to realize. In spiritual life too, it is renunciation that determines your progress and success. The Upanishads repeatedly stress the need for *thyaga*. What is the nature of renunciation ? How can one achieve it ?

Life consists of work, *karma*. To avoid *karma* any time during life is impossible. This being the basic truth, what can we hope to renounce ? Krishna says the only thing which you can renounce is the *sanga* towards the results of actions, which is habitually at work in our minds. Mark the words—"*sanga* towards the results." Not that you should disown the results when they come and then pass them on to another. What is required of you is to keep a calm and egoless mind. Do not think "I have done this work, and have attained this result. Attainment of the result has been my creation." etc. Also, do not cause agitation to your mind when an undesirable outcome takes place. Keeping thus an equal and indifferent mind so far as the results of your *karmas* are concerned, this is the *phalathyaga* which Krishna speaks of. He who maintains such renunciation, says Krishna, is the real *thyagi*. Not one who has taken to idleness by divorcing all work. A renunciation of this kind instantly bestows peace and blessedness to the mind.

Karma yoga, we said, takes one to the state of liberation. How does it do so? It is necessary to know the secret about it.

For that, you should know the significance of the term 'bondage' because liberation is the state free from bondage. The *sanga* to the results of *karma*, which is at present ingrained in your being, is the real bondage. This *sanga* is based upon the feeling of identity which we have with the world and the worldly things and enjoyments. Being compelled to work always, we find this bondage manifest through the feelings that assail our mind in relation to the results of our *karmas*. The thoughts about results afflict the mind in various ways, with delight and depression, love and hatred, etc. These are called *dwandwas,* because of their mutually opposite nature. The influence of the *dwandwas* is the true form of the mind's *bandha* (bondage). When the *dwandwa* influence is kept away or overcome, then the bondage too vanishes, and with that freedom or liberation results. *Karma yoga* trains you throughout to keep an even, unruffled mind. Taking the results and their consideration for the purpose, the mind is taught to remain equally disposed towards anything and everything. The equableness of the mind, by the very nature of it, constitutes liberation.

If you can practise *karma yoga*, after knowing its full implication, you require nothing else, as a means of *sadhana,* for attaining your soul's freedom. The *karma yogi* will find his fulfilment in course of time through the pursuit of the *karma sadhana* itself. While others achieve the same end by means of hard and exclusive penance, by means of deep *vichara* and contemplation, the *karma sadhaka* pays all his attention to watch and keep the mind and keep it *sama* and free of *sanga* all through his life and work. His *sadhana* goes on when he is in the house, in the workspot, in the market place, in the playfield, and where not ? The sacrifice he achieves in the process is immense. The wisdom he acquires is also very great. All working together take him safely to the abode of liberation. The day-to-day life and work persist on the one side, and Vedantic *sadhana* goes on on the other, like the two sides of a coin. This is the unique advantage of *karma yoga,* or *karma sadhana,* provided you can understand it aright and practise it vigilantly.

Before concluding this talk, let me once again remind you that there is nothing which prevents you from taking to *karma yoga* and attaining liberation in this life itself. All the necessary factors to involve you in the *sadhana* are there already. Your own determination is the only factor you have to contribute.

4th day's talk: *25th Feb. 1970*

THE SCIENCE OF DEVOTION OR BHAKTI YOGA

Today's talk, as you know, will be devoted to 'Devotion' (*Bhakthi*), and the *yoga sadhana* based upon it. As was the case with *Karma Yoga*, here too in *Bhakthi Yoga, bhakthi* (devotion) is the medium (means) to be employed for gaining your end. *Bhakthi* is used as *yoga*, meaning *yoga sadhana*. This is the significance of the term '*bhakthi yoga*'. In order to understand the *karma sadhana*, a right knowledge of what *karma* is essential. In the same way, here too we have to understand what devotion is, so that we use it properly as a *sadhana* for gaining our spiritual end.

Bhakthi or devotion is a divine sentiment, which sprouts in any gentle human mind. I describe it as a 'divine sentiment' only to distinguish it from the so many other sentiments produced by the mind. The other sentiments have only a worldly or material importance because they relate to the things of the world. For example, all of us have love and respect for our parents. These sentiments are, truly viewed, of a worldly nature, for the reason that the persons to whom they are related (namely our parents) are beings of the world. But God, to whom the sentiment called *bhakthi* is related, is not a worldly being. If anything definite can be spoken of God, it is that He is non-worldly out and out. By the word 'divine' we only mean this 'non-worldliness' or non-worldly nature.

Devotion, taken merely as that, will not lead you anywhere. It will just remain a sentiment, like the so many other sentiments in your mind. If you have to gain spiritual wisdom and fulfilment through devotion, you will have to regard it as a form of Vedantic *sadhana* and then be devoted to its pursuit. This means that the devotional sentiment needs to be touched up, reinforced and refined, with a view to making it yield the result we are aiming at. In other words if the pursuit of devotional path demands as much of self-effort as the others. There is no scope for the devotee to take things easy.

Before explaining the origin and development of devotion, I want to impress upon you that there is no question of a conflict between devotion and the other forms of *sadhana*. Bhagavatha is the most authoritative scripture on devotion. In that you can find, in the beginning, the Rishis questioning Sootha, the story teller, thus:

"O Sootha, you have read quite a number of scriptures and sastras. Kindly tell us the essence which all of them contain. We want to know it from you."

Sootha then proceeds to answer them:

वदन्ति तक्षत्वविदः तत्वं यत् ज्ञानमद्वयं ।
ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शद्बयते ।।

Vadanthi that-thatwa-vidah
Thatwam yajjnaanam adwayam
Brahmethi paramaatmethi
Bhagavaan-ithi sabdyathe

The knowers say that the truth (to be known) is in the nature of *non-dual knowledge-adwaya-gyana*. It is this which goes by the different names of *Brahman, Paramatma* and *Bhagawan*.

As you can find, Sootha's reply is quite brief, but fully suggestive. It leaves no room for any doubt at all. It tells us that what we call 'God' really denotes the non-dual knowledge, the knowledge which does not allow us to divide the things of the world in any way, to foster any 'dual notion' about the existence of the worldly things. The words used for indicating the *adwaya-gyana* may differ as Brahman, Paramatthman, God, etc. But the content or idea of all of them is the same. It is just one.

I say this in order to remove any misunderstanding you may have about the nature of the different Yoga paths. All the paths are essentially one, but garbed differently. All clothes we put on are either made of cotton, silk or other artificial fabrics. But they differ in textures, colour, etc. The purpose served by them all is the same. Nevertheless, they present themselves differently. It is so because the people who make use of the clothes have different tastes. Those tastes cannot be met, unless the apparent variety is there. Similar is the case with the different forms of *Yoga sadhana.* All *sadhanas* are essentially one, but in their expressions they carry a difference.

Bhakthi, one form of *Yoga sadhana,* must lead us to the *non-dual knowledge,* if it has to fulfil its purpose. It must be able to purify the mind of the *sadhaka* and then awaken his intellect so that he may achieve Self-realization. In the Gita, Krishna makes a reference to *bhakthi* thus:

ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते।

Dadaami budhdhi-yogam tham
Yena maam upa yanthithe

The devotees will be given *budhdhi-yoga* through which they will be able to attain the divine abode. From this you can understand that the devotional path must take you to *budhdhi-yoga,* for only then you will be able to realize the spiritual goal. Ultimately it is a question of your getting illumined or awakened inwardly.

However, it is obvious that there is no conflict between the *bhakthi* form of *sadhana* and the other forms. The starting point of each path alone differs from the other's. The destination is the same for all.

Bhakthi is for those who have an inborn love for the Almighty, who feel a natural reliance on Him. With them such love and relience are things readily available. They need not exert or strain themselves in order to cultivate them. As such, it is better that they preserve these sentiments and proceed to do whatever is necessary to elevate them to come to a kind of Vedanta *Sadhana*.

There are many people who cannot believe so much in God and religious life as they can in the world and their life in it. They too are born of the same God from whom the so-called 'believers' have been. Such people should not, therefore, be denied the benefit of *yoga sadhana* and the peace and well-being which it brings. The *karma yoga* or the science of work is one designed to suit the tastes of these worldly people. Because of its scientific and logical nature, the *karma sadhana,* as we explained it, will be fully acceptable to them. They will not resent to adopt the principle of keeping the mind impartial and equanimous while doing *karma* in the world, as that is the only valid principle which can ensure stability and courage, as also peacefulness, while swimming in the world of *karmas*.

Coming back to devotion: The need for cultivating devotion, or *bhakthi,* may be occasioned by various factors. Look at the wide and imposing world around you. The mighty earth is a piece of creation amazing to all of us. The endless waters floating on the surface of the earth are sure to perplex any onlooker. The powerful wind and the blazing fire or other elements spell fear even to the courageous men. There are like these so many other things in the world, each of which has its own unique note of fear, surprise or admiration to instil in you. All of them do set our imagination wondering, some time or other, as to how could all these imposing phenomena have been born. Who is the creator behind all these ?

The creator cannot be any human being, much less a sub-human source. We know that the powers of the human and the sub-human are alike limited. With the powers he boasts of, man has not yet been able to understand fully the nature around him. What to speak then of his creating them ? Our imagination is thus at a loss to understand the creator of the world. At the same time, it cannot but keep wondering as to who the creator could be. To wonder is our birthright. It is the prompting of our 'created' nature !

'God' is a term, which we invented ourselves, for denoting the source from which this world has originated. It indicates for us a power which is not of the world, which, using our 'worldly language', we can say is something super-human, supra-mundane, spiritual, metaphysical and the like, provided these expressions convey what we intend.

In other words, God is a divine being, infinitely more powerful than all the creatures in the world considered together. He must embody in Himself all the powers belonging to the worldly beings *plus infinitely* more. He must be unlimited all-powerful, all-pervading. Otherwise, it will be impossible for him to create or control this wondrous world..

Every one has to arrive at the concept of God. If some are not prepared to do so, for their own reasons, then they will be compelled to substitute some other concepts for God. Such concepts may be philosophical, Vedantic or yet something different. I do not want to speak about the other concepts, as today our subject is devotion. We shall restrict our talk to *Bhakthi* alone.

I am reminded of some verses of Bhagavatha which describe the people fit for taking to the path of devotion.

योगास्त्रयो मया प्रोक्ता नृणां श्रेयोविधित्सया ।
ज्ञानं कर्म च भक्तिश्च नान्योपायोऽस्ति कर्हिचित् ॥

Yogaah thrayo maya prokthaa nrinaam
sreyovidhitsayaa
Gyanam karma cha bhakthischa
na-anyopayosthi karhichit

Krishna says here that God prescribed three paths for the purpose of bestowing upon mankind ultimate good and blessedness. They are *gyana, karma* and *bhakthi*. There is no path besides these three. He then proceeds to describe the nature of people who are fit to adopt one or the other of these paths.

निर्विणानां ज्ञानयोगो न्यासिनामिह कर्मसु ।
तेष्वनिर्विण्णचिक्षानां कर्मयोगस्तु कामिनां ॥

Nirvinnaanaam gyana-yoga nyasinaam
iha karmasu
Theshu-anirvinna-chittaanam karmayogasthu
kaminaam

There are those few who, right from early age, exhibit symptoms of dispassion towards worldly enjoyments. Such people are ripe for pursuing the first path, namely *gyana*. The pursuit of the *gyana path* implies detachment to the so-called religious rituals and also worldly activities. Those in whom this trait is found, almost as an inborn quality, are alone competent to enter into this path outright.

Then comes the question of *karma-sadhakas*. Krishna characterises them as *anirvinnachittas*. It means their minds will not be having that much of *vairagya* (dispassion) which the former kind will. On the contrary, they will be having a number of desires for things worldly and heavenly. For such *kaamees* (desireful persons), *karma-yoga,* which we have already discussed here, is suitable. That will yield for them the best results.

Thirdly comes the case of *bhakthaas* and *bhakthi sadhana*. Krishna's words about are:

यदृच्छया मत्कथादौ जातश्रद्धस्तु यः पुमान्।
न निर्विण्णो नातिसक्तो भक्तियोगोस्य सिद्धिदः ।।

Yadrichayaa mat-kathaadow jaatha-
sradhasthu yah pumaan
Na-nirvinno naathisaktho bhakthi-yogosya
sidhidah

The description is beautiful and quite suggestive. The third category of people, who are the majority, are neither dispassionate nor passionate. They will not have any appreciable detachment to the world, nor again such attachment to it. Their minds will, therefore, be quite fertile to absorb spiritual knowledge and lessons. Generally, it so happens that they accidentally (*yadrichayaa*) go to a spiritual or devotional assembly, where some religious or Vedantic discourse, such as this, takes place. But on hearing the talks, they find it quite appealing to their minds, which fact is rather a surprise to them. They continue to attend the talks and this marks the beginning of a new life and thinking for them. Being not too attached to worldly things, to spend some time on religious practices will not be difficuult for them. Nay, they develop a taste for it. At the same time, they have no idea of renouncing the worldly life or activity in order to take to an exclusive religious life. The subtle and comprehensive *gyana* lessons, or the *gyana path,* will be beyond their reach. Hence, the *mediocre yoga path,* namely, the *bhakthi sadhana,* is the best and most profitable for such souls.

What an appropriate description, what an assessment! I think most of the so-called enquirers, religious and philosophical, in the world belong to this category. This is why the path of devotion has become very popular and considered easy by all. Its popularity is conceded. But whether it is so easy as the devotees think is a point we shall have to find out later.

Both *karma-sadhana* and *bhakthi-sadhana* are the intermediate or middle paths. Buts *karma-sadhana* is in a way more exacting than the *bhakti* path. In *karma-yoga,* truly speaking, there is no thought of God nor the question of doing anything around the God-concept. You will have to be intelligent, discerning and analytical to understand the real technique of the *karma* path. Every time you will have to be on guard, watching your mind to see whether or not it has *sanga* with the fruits of action. If it is there, you will have to remove it by sheer reasoning, *vichara*. But in the *bhakthi* path, there will not be so much difficulty. You can always look to God, fall upon Him, His mercy. In the other path, you are alone, by yourself.

But devotion, too, cannot be that much easy. For, it has its own ideal to be realized. The ideal is to merge with the Almighty, to realize Him first-hand, directly. The devotee must achieve this ideal here and now, not after death, in the other world.

What is God? Where does He exist? What is His nature? These are questions to be taken up and answered by each devotee. God is identical with the Self, in fact. Why so? For, He is indestructible, and there cannot be any second thing like God ; the indestructible Self and God must be the same. This is a truth which the devotional scriptures proclaim. Highly evolved devotees have also realized it themselves.

God can become God and retain His divine nature only when He has an immutable *swabhava*. The things in the world are mutable and destructible. But God, we feel, is not so. The worldly things are limited in their existence and powers. God is not so, cannot be so. If our object in relying upon God, in looking to Him for protection at all times, is to be fulfilled, then He must be present everywhere. He must be powerful enough to do and win anything. Otherwise, how can He come to your rescue whenever you want ?

Thus, God, when the term is fully understood, is the indestructible and immutable Self within you, the 'I' in you. Hence the ultimate goal of devotion is the same as that of the *karma* and *gyana* paths. Bhagavatha speaks of the ideal of devotion in the following verse :

एकान्तभक्तिर्गोविन्दे यत् सर्वत्र तदीक्षणं ॥

Ekaantha bhakthir-Govinde Yat sarvathra thadeekshanam.

Ekaantha bhakthi means exclusive devotion, devotion which is absolute and sovereign. When you are able to achieve this, your ideal will be realized, not until then. It is by no means easy.

If you get whatever you want, as long as everything comes to you in the way you expect and you have no needs and wishes unfulfilled. you can easily remain grateful to God and be thinking of Him in all pleasant ways. But when matters drift and you begin to meet adversities and reverses frequently, then your devotion will start contracting, getting broken.

I was once told the story of a devotee living in a famous city of our country. The devotion he cultivated was so intense that he used to walk openly through the pubilc roads singing the names of the Lord aloud. But it so happened that he suddenly lost one of his children. It was a premature death. This brought a great change in his mind, and his ways began to turn in the opposite direction. He lost all faith in God, in His power and mercy. He thought it best to drink liquor and make merry in order to give vent to his wrath towards the Almighty and to recover from the shock. Thus he began to spend his days negligently, how long I don't know. If this be the nature of devotion which the intelligent human cultivates, what can I say ? I have no words to speak about such a fate which devotion meets in the hands of its votaries.

Devotion teaches us the supremacy of God in all matters relating to your personal life, to the world around you and to everything here and hereafter. If God were a product like the things we see and can think of, then He would cease to be God. He is invincible and gracious, no doubt. But that does not mean you can submit His actions to your acid tests or the arguments of logic. On the other hand, if He has to preserve His Godliness, then His ways must remain inscrutable in every respect. If He becomes a thing to be fully imagined or thought of by us, if His nature and manner of work can be comprehended by our intellect, then it would mean the losing of His nature. He will bless you with a child today. He may decide to take that child away after two years. He may bestow riches upon one man, but rob it from another. In spite of such confusing and indefinite nature of His work, if you are able to foster devotion to him, then alone you need become a devotee. To always expect of God what you most relish and wish for is wrong. But alas, this is a truth which invariably escapes the attention of devotees.

Who asks you to think of God, much less to worship Him or be devoted to Him ? The very concept of God is something you have evolved yourself. It inheres in your own mind and intellect, not anywhere else. As I told you while discussing the evolution of Vedic thinking, it is the thinking or imagination of man which compelled him to conceive of a source of creation for the world. In the same way, it is his own practical needs and urges that induced him to find out a suitable source in which he can seek refuge whenever troubled by the world and its vicissitudes, a source to whom he can confide himself fully and ventilate his grievances, a source whom he can expect to fulfil his desires and hopes.

In thinking of God and in cultivating devotion to Him, thus, it is the needs and urges of man that come to play from the beginning to the end. It is clear that God has not asked us to worship Him, keeping a photo or idol in front. If man takes to the worship of God, it is the prompting of his own imagination. It is also for his own chosen purposes.

In fostering devotion too, it is our mind and its needs that become significant right through. You must be aware of this basic fact while discussing the subject of devotion. Suppose something disappointing, like the death of a child, befalls you, if you feel like persecuting God and taking revenge on Him, it is far too ignoble. If you do so, you alone will suffer, not God. In fact, the purpose of worshipping God, looking to Him as a sure source of refuge at all times, is to help us gain peace and consolation during our troubled moments. If this purpose is to be fulfilled, then at no time should you think ill of devotion and blame God on any ground whatever. If you try to find fault with God, you will be finding fault with yourself. The object of attack will be you, not He.

So be cautious and wise. Be careful about the effect of what you do out of ignorance. Take to devotion and nurture it in your heart only after you know well what its need and place are.

Now, let us see what Bhagavatha says about the ideal of devotion. Bhagavatha describes the ideal as 'the seeing of God in everything ' *Sarvathra* means everywhere, *that-eekshanam* means the seeing of Him. You must be able to find God in everything, at every time, in every place and in every event. You should see the presence of God in fortune and misfortune alike, in the birth of your child and its death (if the child happens to die at all), in riches and poverty, in your success and failure alike. Also in good and in bad, in virtue and in vice taking place all round you.

When I tell you this is the ideal, many contradictory thoughts may come to your mind. Many doubts may assail. But in course of time, when you attain considerable progress in the pursuit of devotion, all these will disappear one after another. Do not be unduly concerned about them now.

The practice of devotion, unlike in the case of with the *karma gyana* practices,, may be begun any time. Even a young boy or girl may take to it. You can begin with the chanting of God's name. Later, when you so feel, you can supplement it with the performance of pooja, if necessary, as did the ancient Vedic thinkers. They first chanted hymns, but later felt like doing rituals as the next step. Whatever be your practice, your intention must be to gain better and clearer vision, greater and deeper purity. These cannot be gained without your deliberate effort. See what Krishna says in the Gita to Arjuna:

> मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय।
>
> *Mayi eva mana aadhatswa mayi budhim nivesaya*
>
> "You should establish your mind in me, make your intellect absorbed in me."

For that effort is essential. To make the mind and intellect remain firm in the thought of God is the duty of the devotee. Once this is done, then the progress is fast and smooth. That is to say, the fact that you are a devotee must be reflected in your mind and intellect. Your thoughts must reveal the devotion you have, and likewise, your resolutions must manifest the divinity of your life and actions.

The mind, you know, is the nurture of thoughts. The thoughts will be generally hanging round the world. It is but natural, for you do not know of anything other than the visible things of the world. But this state should not be allowed to persist long, once you wish to grow in the path of devotion. It is to this end that you take up the concept of God and culture it in your mind and heart. So, think and find out yourself, what is God, what His nature is, for what purpose you think of Him, etc. When these questions are raised and answered in your own mind, then indeed will it be drawn towards God effortlessly.

To make the mind turn Godward, the inspiration will have to come from the intellect. If intellect has to give the necessary inspiration, it will have to be convinced about the presence of God, the utility of worshipping Him, etc. Thus, now or later, you will have to start *vichara* in these lines. For *vichara* is the force to tune and sharpen the intellect. It is the agency to take you to the abode of God, the abode of Truth or Reality.

Prahlada did long penance to propitiate Lord Vishnu. Of all the devotees, he was the best. He had no expectation at all from the Lord, no desire to be fulfilled. So, at the end of the penance, Vishnu appeared before him and asked; "What boon do you want of me? Here I stand ready to give anything you desire."

Prahlada stood silent for a moment and then said: "O Lord, I have nothing in particular to beg of you. Whatever you consider best and necessary for me, that you may give. I stand ready to receive of you anything of your choice."

Mahavishnu then blessed him thus:

सर्वसंभ्रमसंशान्त्यै परमाय फलाय च ।
ब्रह्मविश्रान्तिपर्यन्तो विचारोऽस्तु तवानघ ॥

Sarva-sambhrama-samsanthyai paramaaya phalaya cha
Brahma-visranthi paryantho vicharosthu thava-anagha

'Let, O Prahlada, vichara enter your mind and work on until all your agitation subsides, and the ultimate object of human life is gained. O sinless soul, this is the blessing I bestow upon you.'

This is how the devotee Prahlada was blessed by Lord Vishnu. The story clearly demonstrates that even the path of devotion is not devoid of the effort of *vichara* or enquiry. Devotion too takes the human to the same ultimate abode of Truth as do the other paths. The abode is within and the entrance to it is through the mind and buddhi.

I need not elaborate the nature of *vichara* the devotee has to take up to reinforce his *sadhana*. Whatever be the *vichara* he adopts, it must lead him to the abode of God, the abode of the Indestructible. We have already seen that the Indestructible is the *chetana* animating our body. Thus, even the devotional path is founded upon facts and truths, not merely on imagination. The devotee, or the *bhakthi sadhaka,* should realize these facts sooner or later. The sooner the better. Here is a verse from Srimad Bhagavatha which tells us what the nature of God is, and where we have to trace Him.

स्थित्युद्भवप्रलयहेतुरहेतुरस्य
यत्स्वप्नजागरसुषुप्तिषु सत् बहिश्च ।
देहेन्द्रियासुहृदयानि चरन्ति येन
संजीवितानि तदवेहि परं नरेन्द्र ॥

Sthithyudbhava-pralaya-hethu-rahethurasya
Yat swapna jagara sushupthishu sat bahischa
Dehendriyasuhridayaani charanthi yena
Sanjeevithaani thadavehi param narendra

One day a group of nine yogins went to the palace of King Nimi, during their wanderings. The King instantly received those venerable souls. After their needs were attended to, he spoke to them in all piety and respect: 'O revered sages, kindly instruct me in regard to the *dharmas* of a devotee which are highly pleasing to the Lord and which will beget His chosen blessings.' In reply, the sages began to speak in turns. The above verse is taken from the reply given by one of them. As you can find, it has the best relevance to our discussion here. That is why I quoted it.

The verse pin-points the existence of God in very simple terms. It says: God is the cause of the origin of the world, of its existence (*sthithi*) and also its destruction (*pralaya*). But by knowing this fact, our approach to find God cannot be helped in any way. I have already told you the reason for it. How can any of us go round the whole universe or live back the time the world has existed so far, in order to find out the source from which it was born ? It is obvious that none of us will be alive to witness the state of dissolution. This means that our search to find out the creator, sustainer and dissolver of the world can never be fruitful, by the very nature of such an attempt. So we are compelled to retreat from it. At the same time we want to find God. How ?

The sage says that God is present in our three mental states—in the wakeful, dream and sleep states. You can find Him if you search these three states. A search into these states is quite within our power to do. So, there is hope for us. But these states, all of them, are not useful in the matter. Because sleep is a state of forgetfulness, during sleep, we cannot know anything at all. Even the knowledge that we slept comes to us only when we wake up from it. What about dream then ? That too is equally useless, because virtually we *are* never in the dream state. During dream, it is so much real that we do not know it to be dream at all. Only when it begins putting us back to wakefulness, we are able to think of the state, we were in until then, as the *dream state* Moreover, dream is one which thrusts itself upon us without any basis or reason. It is beyond our control. Hence, we are unable to say if it has any ground for making our search or examination.

Thus you are left with only one state, the waking. Wakefulness is quite consistent and meaningful. Unlike the other two, it gives us '*current knowledge*'. We are able to know that we are wakeful. There is full awareness, understanding. There is also every chance to compare, contrast, evaluate, conduct enquiries, etc., in the wakeful state. As the sage says that God is present in the wakeful state also, as in the other two, we are relieved, for we feel sure we can find Him.

What function does God do in the waking

state ? How can we find access to his abode ? Here, the third line of the verse becomes quite significant. It says that God resides within, activating the body, mind, senses, *pranaas,* etc. That is to say, the power which causes these to function is really the Almighty, the Absolute Power in the universe. A very clear clue. It must satisfy you.

Does not this statement take you to the *Kenopanishad* enquiry: 'What power makes the mind think, makes the eye see, the ear hear, etc. ?' Is it not clear from this that the devotional *sadhana* and the Upanishadic enquiry, both converge on the same point ? The destination of all paths is one, not different.

King Nimi is thus told to find out the in-dweller in his own body. The place to see God is one's own within. Devotion also must take one thus to the indestructible *chetana* in the body, the source upon which the 'I' subsists. Remove, therefore, any misunderstanding you have about the correct nature of devotion and the way in which it should progress. As in the other paths, it is for you to make deliberate efforts if you want to achieve fulfilment in *bhakthi sadhana. Vichar* is indispensable for *bhakthas* as for the other *sadhakas*. Only when you are convinced about the existence of God, His omnipresent nature, will your mind follow the *buddhi,* and both together work their way to God-realization.

When a devotee realizes that there is a lot to be done by him in order to achieve the set purpose of devotion, then he will begin to think and exert himself in various ways. He will find the way hard, sometimes too hard, as says Uddhava in Bhagavatha. Here is a verse taken from the eleventh skanda of the scripture, which will give you an idea about Uddhava's difficulty. He tells Krishna:

सोऽहं ममाहमिति मूढमतिर्विगाढः
त्वन्मायया विरचितात्मनि सानुबन्धे ।
तत्वञ्जसा निगदितं भवता यथाहं
संसाधयामि भगवन्ननुशाधि भृत्यं

Soham mamaaham-ithi moodhamathir-vigaadhah
Twanmaayayaa virachithaatmani saanubandhe
Tatwanjasaa nigaditham bhavathaa yatha-aham
Samsaadhayaami bhagavan anusaadhi bhrithyam

O Lord I am deluded by your Maya, the inscrutable power. As a result, the wrong notions that 'I am the body', the relations of the body are 'mine', etc., cling to my mind. However much I try, I am unable to rise above these wrong ideas and find my way to the lofty abode pointed out by you just now. I want to reach the point you have indicated to me. But I find myself helpless. Therefore, O Lord, instruct me well enough, so that my delusion may leave me, and with the help of clear vision, I may reach the abode of Truth the soonest.

Uddhava was the best of all the known devotees of the Lord. Even he, you find, speaks openly like this. Then, what should be the fate of all of us, who are much inferior to Uddhava ? This amply illustrates that after a time, even for the devotee, it is a struggle to get over ignorance and wrong attachments, gain true knowledge and insight, and finally to achieve the spiritual goal. Where then does the question of sitting tight arise for the votaries of devotion ?

As long as you are not able say 'I am God's, as is everything and every one in the world', your devotion can only be crude, rudimentary, under-developed. If omnipresence of God is a fact, then you must be able to feel His presence in your body too. If your devotional *sadhana* cannot take you to a realization of this nature, of what purpose will it be ? Have not true devotees sung with one voice about their identity with the Almighty :

माता मे पार्वती देवी पिता देवो महेश्वरः ।
बान्धवाः शिवभक्ताश्च स्वदेशो भुवनत्रयम् ॥

Matha Me Parvati Devi phitha Devo Maheswaraha
Bhandavah Sivabhakthascha svadeso bhuvanthrayam

"My mother is Goddess Parvathi. Lord Hara is my father. The devotees of the Lord are relatives I have. All the three worlds are truly my native village."

These are the spontaneous utterances of any gentle human mind, when it reaches the acme of devotion. There should be no distance for the true devotee between him and God. He must be able to realize his own mind as the abode of the Omnipresent Reality. When he has realized that, he will be able to see everything outside as a similar abode of the same God. Thus, the realization of oneness or non-dual knowledge, I spoke about to you earlier, will be reached.

Look at what Gita teaches the devotee. Krishna tells Arjuna in the 12th chapter about the characteristic of a true devotee. The real devotee must be equal-minded, he says. He should not hate any one at all. For, is not the God, he worships, present in every one ? To love God is to love every one, everything. Hence, hatred fostered towards any body is the hatred to God Himself.

He further says that the devotee must be devoid of the 'I' and 'mine' notions. These notions do imply the presence of their opposites too—'the other' and 'the other's.' That means a division comes up. And what do you divide ? You divide, if at all, God, who is one and uniformly present everywhere. Is it right to divide Him so ? So, to approach God through devotion is to approach Him through the negation of the *dual* and *plural ideas,* through resisting the *dwandwas* which your mind deludedly fosters. Thus, to tread the path of devotion is really to tread the path of knowledge, to march inward, to climb higher and higher within yourselves until you reach the ultimate abode of oneness, non-dualness, the indivisible *chetana* upon which subsists the 'I' in you. Through his teachings, Krishna is trying to instil purity and true wisdom to the mind and *buddhi* of the devotee. And that is the greatness of Gita too.

As in *karma sadhana,* here too, the progress is through your meeting mutually opposite results, conditions, etc., arising from time to time. The devotee must be contented with anything that comes to him and with anything that goes from him. He should not allow either elation or depression to engulf his mind. For this, he must necessarily be placed in a series of altering situations. The worldly life, by its nature, is such that it offers such situations in plenty. Krishna says that a *bhaktha* must be equal-minded in praise and blame (*maana* and *apamaana*). He must react without reaction to the friend and to the foe. The purpose is to go on evenising the mind, until the mind becomes uniform and single-centred in the end. As the clear surface of the mirror, it will then reflect the uniform and the even Lord at all times.

Many people are given to the habit of finding faults in the world. They go on asking 'why is the world like this ?'. You can find the answer for this question now. The world is neither faulty nor unfaulty. It is only a series or collection of mutually opposite things, called *dwandwas.* Neither set of these *dwandwas* has less or more value and importance than the other. Both are equal. Both are intended for helping the evolution of beings in the world. The world cannot but contain the *dwandwas,* for to be devoid of them would be to disappear or die itself. Besides, only when the world remains as it is now, that is as a forum wherein *dwandwas* freely exist and play, we the livers can make proper use of it (the world), and it can contribute to our spiritual progress, purity and perfection.

Whatever takes place in the world around or in your own personal life, know that it is ordained by God. For, is not God the only source of everything? As my Guru has told me: *Bhagavathaa vidhaatraa yat krityathe that sarvam hi subhaayathe*— 'whatever is done by the Lord Bhagawan is for your good.' Rely upon his truth, this warning. Bring it to your mind and console yourself whenever you meet disappointment or failure. Thus repeated introspection or *vichara* must be done to cleanse your mind, to expand your vision.

The world is God manifest visibly. You too are His manifest from. Why then worry? Worry can result only when you lose hold of this ultimate truth. So whenever agitation assails your mind, what you require to do is to think of this truth again and again. Remember always the truth that man is an outcome of his understanding. He grows along with his knowledge. Therefore, the best source of strength and correction for you is the right knowledge. Here is a poem composed by a great soul:

'I stay my haste, I make delays
    For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid eternal ways
    And what is mine shall know my face.

Asleep, awake, by night or day
The friends I seek are seeking me;
No wind can drive my bark astray
Nor change the tide of destiny.'

Sing these lines to console your aggrieved mind. There are so many utterances like these, in poetry and prose, in different languages. You can make use of one or more of them.

Every moment of your life you are being carried to fulfilment irresistibly. Everything that comes to you does so to improve, correct or alter your nature, thereby leading you towards greater perfection. You are getting from every quarter that which your nature deserves and needs for its march towards perfection. This is an unfailing truth about our life and its progression.

One simple method for cultivating devotion as a form of Vedantic *sadhana* is to recite devotional songs or poems. To sing songs may be difficult, because it involves the knowledge of an intricate science. But to recite poetry is not so. Any one can do it, with more or less melody. Singing simple *bhajans* is also very good. Meera *Bhajans* must be very effective, as Meera was a great devotee of the Lord. I think she was a 'fulfilled soul.' Her songs will be highly inspiring and suggestive.

If *bhajans* cannot be sung by you, take to recitation. In the matter of recitation, you have no excuse to offer. May be your voice is rough.

What of it ? You are not reciting to please any body. If at all, you try to please God. And He cannot say your voice is not agreeable. Because it is His creation, not yours.. So do not worry or feel shy at all. If you cannot be free with God, with whom else can you be ?

Recite not praises, but verses which carry some meaning and suggestions for your mind and intellect. Your recitations must be such that they contain some useful thinking. When you recite, be alone in a room. Recite loudly, and listen to the recitation as though it is done by another person. By so doing, you will overcome your shyness. Concentration too will be easier. Because, in such recitation and listening, one of your *karmendriyas*— the mouth—and one *gyanendriya* (ear) are being used. When thus two *indriyas* get involved, concentration will be had effortlessly. If you know the meaning of your recitations, it is all the better. In that case, along with each word uttered, let your mind bring the meaning of it to your imagination. If it does so, then a very powerful harmony, synchronisation, will be achieved. And you will derive considerable delight and solace from the performance. It is verily a kind of *yoga* itself.

If you adopt recitation as a form of *sadhana,* then that alone will take you to the zenith. You will in time select the best and most inspiring verses. Reciting them repeatedly, you will gradually gain mental purity and intellectual sharpness. Both together will achieve for you the realization of God, of your own Self. For that, you should make a practice of reciting for a few minutes or hours and, at the end, stopping the recitation, you should sit quietly. Watch your within in that quiet pose. You will find the whole of your body (actually it is your being) is filled with some feelable presence, some kind of mystic energy. The very feeling or awareness of it will be pleasant, joyous and revealing. You will have a sort of communion with the silence or quietitude within you. That communion will be refreshing and illumining a great deal. Many other experiences may also crop up, about which I will not mention now. Nor is it necessary.

The practice of devotion, in any simple manner, will take even the ordinary unintelligent man to the realization of God. The way in which it leads the devotee is described in the *seventh skanda* of Bhagavatha. These are the verses which speak of the progress of devotion and its purificatory effect:

निशम्य कर्माणि गुणान् अतुल्यान् वीर्याणि लीलातनुभिः कृतानि ।
यदातिहर्षोत्पुलकाश्रुगदगदं प्रोत्कण्ठ उद्गायति रौति नृत्यति ॥
यदा ग्रहग्रस्त इव क्वचित् हसत्याक्रन्दते ध्यायति वन्दते जनम् ।
मुहुः श्वसन् वक्ति हरे जगत्पते नारायणेत्यात्ममतिर्गतत्रपः ॥

Nisamya Karmani Gunam Athulyanu Veeryani
leelathanubhi krithani
Yadhatheharshothpulakasughadhagadham
prothkanta udgayathi routhi nrithyathi

Yadha grahagrastha iva kvachit hasathyakrandhathe dhyayathi vandhathe janam
Muhuhusvasan vakthi Hare jagathpathe Narayanethyathmamathirgathathrapaha

The devotees who find a natural love towards the Almighty will experience several pleasant sensations on hearing the stories describing the greatness of the Lord, His deeds and sports. Their hair will stand on end, face turn red, throat get choked, thereby giving them an inexplicable delight. In such moments they will not hesitate to sing aloud, cry and weep profusely or even to dance openly in ecstacy. They have some other characteristic moods too. Sometimes, they will behave like one possessed by an evil spirit, thereby laughing, weeping, sitting pensive, rising up and greeting people avoiding all sense of shame and fear. They will openly call out 'O Hari, O Lord of the universe, O Narayana'.

तदा पुमान् मुक्तसमस्तबन्धनः
तद्भावभावानुकृताशयाकृतिः ।
निर्दग्धबीजानुशयो महीयसा
भक्तिप्रयोगेण समेत्यधोक्षजं ॥

Thadha puman mukhthasamasthabandhanaha
Thadhbhavabhavanukrithasayakrithihi
Nirdhaghdabheejanusayo Mahiyasa
Bhakthiprayogene Samethyadhokshejam

When they exult thus in supreme devotion, they start heaving pronounced sighs frequently, forgetting the surroundings and remaining lost in the thought of the Lord. Their body and mind getting completely attuned to the Lord and His deeds, all their bonds of ignorance and desires get destroyed. By means of the highest device of devotion, they thus attain to the Lord in the end.

अधोक्षजालम्भमिहाशुभात्मनः
शरीरिणः संसृतिचक्रशातनं ।
तद् बह्मनिर्वाणसुखं विदुर्बुधाः
ततौ भजध्वं हृदये हृदीश्वरम ।।

Adhokshajalambhamihasubhatmanaha
Saririnah Samsrithichakrasathanam
Thadh Bahnanirvanasukham Vidhurbudhaha
Thathou Bhajadhvam Hridaye Hridiswaram

The communion with the Lord, who is invisible and, therefore, dwelling within the body, gains for them freedom from the cycle of births and deaths. It removes from their mind all impurities and the ideas of difference and separation. The knowers of truth say that the embrace with the Lord which these devotees attain, during the spiritual states of ecstacy is the same as *Brahma-nirvana*. Therefore, worship Oh young boys, that Ruler who resides in your own heart.

These are the words of Prahlada to his young friends.

What difference do you find in the goal attained by the staunch devotees and that attained by the Vedantic *gyana-nisthas* ? The ultimate purpose of devotion is to lose yourself in the embrace of the Lord within you. That embrace is itself the state of *samadhi* where the entire mind dissolves itself fully, which the Vedantins achieve by means of their *Vichara* and contemplation. Only the approach and in the intermediate development there is a difference. The devotee achieves purity by reciting the name of the Lord variously. The Vedantic seeker tries to achieve the same through introspection and contemplation on his own Self.

Thus there is no need to compare one path with another. Such a comparison is wrong and unnecessary. What you should do is to study the nature of your own mind and discover whether the devotional path or any other is agreeable to it. If it is the *bhakthi* path, adopt it and do the *sadhana* on the lines of devotion wholeheartedly. See that, in the process, you achieve the maximum purity and wisdom in the shortest period of time. However, those who feel any sort of hatred towards the sublime devotional path are paving their way for a fall, now or later. To surrender to the Almighty and then live a life of perfect peace and harmony is no doubt a very covetable achievement. The trouble is that most people are not able to cultivate the attitude of surrender. The reason is that they have either a sense of conceit, or that their minds are full of desires, jealousy and the like. To hate anything is bad. To hate devotion and the devotees is more so. It is to hate yourself, and destroy your own inner peace and strength.

The devotees too must not look at the other groups of sadhakas with any derision. Give a place for every kind of person in your heart, the murderer and the murdered. Are not both the creation of the same God in the ultimate view ?

> "If the red slayer thinks he slays
> Or the slain thinks he is slain
> They know not well the subtle ways
> I keep and pass and turn again."

Everything is Lord Vishnu. Your aim must be to realize him. When you are attempting for such realization, any sense of contempt, intolerance or the like will work havoc for you. So be on the guard.

If you are a devotee, you must be the storehouse of as many virtues as possible. Try to find God in everything around you. Remember the ideal of '*sarvatha thadeekshanam*'. This is the first and last lesson for a devotee. Preserve your contentment at all costs. Do not foster any unpleasantness on any ground whatever. When this is ensured, the rest will follow easily.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

5th day's talk: *26th Feb. 1970*

Gyana Yoga or the Science of Knowledge

Today is the fifth day of our talk. During the past four days, we discussed the spiritual ideal of human life and the methods by which it can be realized. The *karma* and *bhakhti sadhanas,* which are two of the methods, have been explained. Today, we have to take up the *gyana path,* the path of wisdom. *Gyana* is not merely an absolute path by itself leading you towards the realization of the Self. It is also a phase which the followers of the other paths will have necessarily to pass through before attaining fulfilment and '*realization*'.

For the pursuit of *karma-sadhana,* we found that a correct understanding of the truths relating to our life, the world and the Almighty is indispensable . In the same way, a full knowledge of what God is, where and in which manner He exists, etc., is essential before you can begin to practise the *bhakthi-sadhana.* This means that in pursuing any form of *sadhana,* 'knowledge' has a great role to play. Any kind of effort has to base itself upon 'understanding' or 'knowledge' in order to achieve success. Moreover, so far as the *karma* and *bhakthi sadhanas* are concerned, their consummation is through *gyana,* not *otherwise.* 'Knowledge,' thus, precedes and also fulfils those paths.

Now we shall analyse the *gyana sadhana* and see how it takes one to the realization of the

Self. The *Gyana* path is that path which consists of *gyana* (knowledge) alone. If you are a *gyana sadhaka,* you will have to bank always upon the culturing of wisdom or *gyana* for achieving your aim. As the karma sadhaka always looks to the performance of karma, as the devotee always looks to the upkeep of his devotional attitude, here the sadhaka will have to look to the upkeep of the gyana he holds on to throughout ; no matter what he does, thinks and achieves in the course of his life. He will have to preserve the flame of wisdom ; undiminished all the while. For achieving purity of mind, expansion of heart, fineness of intellect, in short for everything, he will have to employ the pursuit of *gyana* itself as the means, the medium. Therein lies the difference from the other paths. The karma path requires you to perform work making it a *sadhana,* the path of devotion requires you to preserve the devotional attitude intact at all times considering it as a *sadhana,* and the path of *gyana* requires you to preserve *gyana* unaffected always, so that, in that very process, you will be naturally led to the vision of Truth.

As I told you while speaking on *Karma Yoga,* the *gyana* path is the first or foremost in the context of Truth seeking. For those who are ripe enough to adopt this path, the realization of Truth is a very quick process. The question of evolving the other paths came up only because all people are not qualified to take to *gyana sadhana* all at once. They will have to be put to some intermediate paths, which will in course of time qualify them to come to *gyana* and then achieve realization of the ideal. So, to speak the truth, there cannot be any comparison between *gyana sadhana* and the other kinds of *sadhana*. *Gyana* is not merely a path. It is an indispensable step in the ladder of spiritual life. Only through *gyana* you can fulfil your life spiritually and philosophically. Sankara says about the *gyana* path:

न सिध्यति विना ज्ञानं विचारेणान्यसाधनैः।
यथा पदार्थभानं हि प्रकाशेन विना क्वचित्॥

Na sidhiathi vina gyanam vicharena-anya sadhanaihi
Yathaa padartha-bhanam hi prakasena vina quachit

The achievement of Self-realization cannot be without the help of vichara (*vichara* means *gyana*). Is it possible for you to have a glimpse of the objects without the instrumentality of light (*prakasa*). It is not enough that you have eyes to see. In order that your eyes may see, there must be the presence of a medium called light. In the same way, only by taking to *gyana sadhana* (the medium called *gyana*—intellectual sharpness or fineness) you can gain a glimpse of the ultimate truth.

It is thus clear that *gyana yoga* is not only supreme as a form of sadhana, as a means of pursuit, but it is equally indispensable. Even the other sadhakas cannot refuse to seek its help, when it comes to a question of their perceiving the Truth—the Self in them, or the Almighty present everywhere.

Not only that. If you boldly study the facts of life and the methods by which you can improve yourself spiritually so that the ideals of peace, blessedness and wisdom can be realized, the position is much different from what many of us think. It is true that we have formulated the concept of God and Godhead. We habitually look to this God for all kinds of protection and guidance. Even our spiritual welfare, we think, is dependent fully upon God and His mercy. But whether the so-called God and His mercy are something real and practically effective is a point to be judged seriously. When you look around the world and observe what is taking place in it from time to time, your imagination is sure to get confounded. With regard to many developments, our thinking mind is unable to correlate cause and effect. A good many of the events remain simply inexplicable. Either theory, of God, His omnipotence, His kindness, etc., or the theory of no God, no omnipotence, etc., we can find as reasonable or accurate. Things are always 'a square peg in a round hole'.

In Mahabharata and likewise in so many other texts, you can find several conversations which clearly reveal that the world is ever inexplicable. The seers admit with one voice that morality is often made to meet sufferings and persecutions, sometimes until the end of one's lifetime, while immorality is found to meet a directly opposite outcome. There are several instances where God saved people in utter distress. At the same time, we find many occasions when He did not do so. These are facts which will compel us to conclude that no one can hope to find peace and relief unless he can seek refuge under his own power of understanding and self-effort. It is with this end in view that Vasishta spoke to Sri Rama:

सीमानं सर्वदुःखानां आपदां कोशमुत्तमम् ।
बीजं संसारवृक्षाणां प्रज्ञामान्द्यं विनाशयेत् ॥

Seemaanam sarva duhkhaanam aapadam
kosamuthamam
Beejam samsaara-vrikshaanaam pragya-
maandyam vinasayet

The cause of all the miseries that you experience, says Vasishta, is your own intellectual dullness. He describes it as *prajna-maandya,* the contractedness of the sense of discrimination. When discrimination grows and expands, with that the experience of misery too will lessen. Similarly, all the dangers that befall you have their cause in your own ignorance or intellectual dullness. The reason why embodiment recurs for you is again the lack of *viveka.* When you improve your viveka and as a result understand that you are the body-different Self, unborn and immortal, with that your embodiment will cease. This life will be the last for you. You will leave the body, if at all, only to rise to the position of the immortal Dhruva.

What do you understand from this advice of Vasishta ? Rama is being told that ultimately we must try to improve our power of understanding, and by that means gain whatever we want and leave whatever we do not. In doing so, you have the support of the Creator, of all the forces that work under His command.

Again, Vasishta holds high the place of wisdom in human life. He says:

सुन्दर्या निजया वुद्धया प्रज्ञयैव वयस्यया ।
पद्मासाद्यते राम न नामक्रिययान्यया ॥

Sundaryaa nijayaa budhyaa prajnayaiva
vayasyayaa
Padam aasaadyathe Rama na nama
kriyaya-anyayaa

You have to gain access to the abode of peace and blessedness, O Rama, yourself, by dint of your own cautious effort. Nobody from outside, in the form of a visible or invisible agency, will come to your rescue. The helpers, if at all, are only two. And they are your own beautiful intellect (*sundaree budhdhi*) and then the trusted friend and counsellor, called discrimination (*prajna*).

People generally think that beauty belongs to the body and its features. They are unable to understand the beauty of the faculties abiding within the body. External beauty alone is to them the source of appreciation and delight.

But, for those who can understand the greatness of the power of knowledge, the thing of beauty, the agency which delights, is not the body. It is something else. The intellect, using which we are able to understand, evaluate, assess and know things is the most beautiful possession. The extent of delight which an illumined intellect can provide for us is really immeasurable. How does poetry delight you ? Not because it is a thing to be seen and enjoyed through seeing. You read or hear poems, ponder over their meanings. In that process, you derive delight. The delight so had is incalculable. When external aids fail you, when your body is incapacitated on getting old or on falling ill, the only delight you can look to is the inner one, the intellectual one. Thus the best comforter and delighter for us is our own intellect. That is why Vasishta characterises it as *sundaree,* beautiful.

A king will have his queen, beautiful and pleasing. From her he will derive a lot of peace and joy, especially when troubled by the things of the world. But the presence and companionship of the queen alone will not be sufficient for him to conduct his royal life with full success. He must have a trusted counseller, who will always help him with timely advice, critical observations and the like. With his services always at his disposal, the king can easily rule the kingdom and also find time for spending with the queen leisurely. Vasishta says the spiritual life too is one like this. For success in it, the seeker must have the companionship of two persons. One is his own intellect. The other is *viveka,* the power of discrimination. To know and to discriminate, these two are different. Of course, they are mutual complements.

The factor of discrimination has to be mentioned specially, and that is why Vasishta speaks of it separately. You know there are a lot of lawyers and scientists, who are noted for their high intellectual powers and greatness. But do they have the spiritual wisdom or realization ? Have they, by dint of their intellectual merits, been able to realize the 'I' in them, to reach God or to find out the Reality pervading the world ? Why ?

They do not couple their intellectual efforts with the power of discrimination. It is discrimination that tells you about the ephemeral nature of the world. It is again a clear discriminating sense which distinguishes for you the subject from the object, thereby treating the body and the mind as objects and the 'I' as the subject. Like this, the work of the *vayasya* (friend) called *prajna* (*viveka*) is indispensable for us. Without his friendship and co-operation, intellectual beauty cannot be fully appreciated. It will have no opportunity to delight us.

See how finely Vasishta puts it.

'Helped by these two persons, O Rama, does man attain the highest good, the ultimate spiritual abode. And not by the chanting of Names or by the doing of acts. Neither 'name' nor 'kriya' is the source of help or medium'.

This is why I told you that when you come to the close, it is all a question of your own understanding getting developed and made powerful to help you reach whatever you want. Now judge for yourselves whether the gyana path is the one indispensable for deriving fulfilment in your spiritual efforts.

True *gyana* is attained, according to Vasishta thus:

विचारात्तीक्ष्णतामेत्य धीः पश्यति परं पदं ।
दीर्घसंसाररोगस्य विचारोहि महौषधम् ॥

Vichaaraat-theekshnathaam ethya dheeh
pasyathi param padam
Deergha-samsaara-rogasya vicharo hi
mahoushadham

Engage your intellect in *vichara,* in spiritual enquiry. Then it will get heated in the process, and gradually become sharper and sharper, until finally it glimpses the peaceful abode of Truth, by itself. For the chronic disease of worldly life, *vichara* (persistent enquiry) alone is the adequate remedy.

Krishna says in Geetha:

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिं अचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥

Sradhdhavaan labhathe gyanam thatparah
  samyathendriyah
Gyaanam labdhwaa paraam saanthim
  achirena-adhigahchathi.

'A man of *sradhdha* (sincerity and devotion) attains *gyana.* But he should keep his interest always and be devoted to it. He must also practise sense-restraint. Without restraint of the senses, the pursuit of *gyana* will be fruitless. After he gains *gyana,* without much of delay, he will be led to the transcendental peace.'

The pursuit of the *gyana* path compels you to engage your budhdhi in the various forms of spiritual enquiry, such as those discussed in the Upanishads. You must give full attention to sense-restraint. The practice of sensory restraint will alone refine your body. The pursuit of enquiry or *vichara* will in turn reform your *anthahkarana* also. When both the body and the within get sufficiently reformed, your way for glimpsing Truth will be clear.

How does *gyana* become a spiritual path or a form of sadhana ? *Gyana,* we know, is an outcome or effect which flashes suddenly in our intellect. As such, how can it be used as a medium for doing the sadhana ?

By *gyana yoga,* we really mean the path of *vichara,* the *vichara sadhana.* What is *vichara* ? It is the effort we make for gaining knowledge.

The effort is made inside the body not outside. What makes the effort is our intellect, not the external body or its limbs. So when I say 'use *gyana* as the means for doing *sadhana*' I mean 'use your intellectual efforts' or '*vichara.*'

Perception of truth is always a job for the intellect to do. Whether you do *karma yoga* or *bhakthi yoga,* if you mean to realize your Self by that, then your intellect will have to come to your aid. There is no doubt about it. As this is so, the best *sadhana* will be to tackle or touch the intellect itself first, so that it may be reformed, refined and finally enabled to perceive the Self. *Vichara* is the means whereby you can accomplish this object, and that is why *gyana yoga* is considered the foremost of all paths. For one who takes to the *vichara sadhana,* much of the usual waiting is avoided. He goes straight to the destination, as if by a flight.

Krishna clearly says in the Geetha that all *karmas* have to find their fulfilment in *gyana.* Again he says that *gyana,* acting like fire, burns off all the results of *karma.* But for the gaining of *gyana,* the *karmas* performed by you will remain a source of bondage at all times. There is no *karma* in the world which will not produce a virtuous or a vicious result, or a combination of both. This means that nobody can be living in the world without being a prey to the bondage of *karma.* What is the way of escape then ? Krishna says 'seek gyana':

यथैधांसि समिद्धोग्निः भस्मसात् कुरुतेऽर्जुन
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात् कुरुते तथा ॥

Yathaidhaamsi samidhognih bhasmasaath
kuruthe Arjuna
Gyana-agnih sarva karmaani bhasmasath
kuruthe thathaa

How can we give the pursuit of *vichara,* which is an intellectual effort, the topmost place? I would like you to think this way. The Vedas first of all speak of prayers, praises and ceremonies. Afterwards in the Upanishads, they decry all of them. Thereupon, they hold Vedantic pursuits as the best. If rituals and their performance were true and effective, will they at one stroke become untrue and ineffective ? What is the meaning of the Upanishadic evaluation of the rituals and ritualistic life ?

I am happy to discuss this question. But on the way, I want you to think basically about *karma,* the sources from which it emanates, its scope, etc.

All *karmas,* whether they are rituals, chanting of hymns, or otherwise, are *activities,* when viewed basically, proceeding from the being of man. How many kinds of activity are there possible for him ? What are they ?

Three kinds of activity can be given expression to by man. The grossest of them is the physical kind, where the body and the limbs are made to work. Next to this is the oral kind, wherein the mouth exerts to produce sounds and sound combinations. This too is visible as the former. Yet there is a clear difference between them. In the bodily or physical activity, the movements are more wider ranged. For instance, when you walk, your body goes on moving from one place to another. But when you talk or do the oral activity, there is no such displacement.

Now comes the third kind of activity. It is invisible unlike the other two, which are visible. The consciousness within the body does the work in this. Mind, intellect, etc., are only names which represent the consciousness. The work of the mind and intellect is subtle, when compared to the oral and bodily work, which are gross. Thus, the difference between the third kind of activity and the other two is quite clear: the former is subtle and invisible, while the latter are gross and visible.

How the third kind of activity is brought about by the consciousness within the body is a great mystery. Because, we defined activity as a kind of movement. Any movement must involve some kind of displacement of the thing which moves, from one point to another. When you speak, the lips, tongue and teeth do produce movements. So too, when you walk, hold, rub, etc., different movements take place. But how can such movements be possible in the internal, subtle activity of the mind ? The consciousness remains within the body completely filling it.

That means there is no space in the body, devoid of consciousness. How then can consciousness move at all ? To which point will it move ? Thus while thinking, intellectual reflection, etc., are to be regarded as subtle activities, we are unable to explain them as any 'activity' in the normal sense of the term. That is why I said they are a mystery.

This point apart, we have to evaluate the three kinds of activity and see how they compare with each other. Their comparative value will be something like 1 : 10 : 100, for the bodily, oral and mental activities respectively. For instance, if you write a word, may be the name of God, using your hand, then the effect it produces in your system or being will be, say 1. If you express the same word orally, then the effect produced will be, say 10. But if you express it mentally, that is, if you think it in your mind, then it becomes the subtle inner activity. And the effect it produces will be 100. This comparison is quite scientific. It is based upon visible facts.

When you exert your mouth for producing a sound or a sound-combination (namely a word), the movement of *praana* involved in the process is quite appreciable. So too the vibrations caused to the body and its parts. Each sound implies a certain *praanic* movement, and that in turn implies a specific effect on the physical body too. The practice of uttering *mantras* and hymns, and the purificatory effect gained by it have their basis upon this principle. Any utterance, more so the Vedic and spiritual ones, produces mystic subtle vibrations in our system. Such vibrations no doubt have the effect of purging the impurities lying in the body and the mind. On this basis, we have to rate the importance of oral movements far higher than that of the bodily movements.

The power of thinking comes next. It is even more than the power of speech. Sounds are visible (audible), but thinking is invisible. In spite of this fact, the effect of thinking is very great, although most of you may not know about this truth. When you think, what happens within the body ? The mind or consciousness breaks itself and this breaking is what goes by the name thinking or thoughts. So the production of thoughts implies a reaction or effect, which I should say is somewhat similar to that of an atomb bomb explosion. Consider that your body is the atmosphere. Generation of thoughts means exploding of the bomb within it.

Even without thinking, the mind brings about several reactions and functions. Feelings, emotions, sentiments, etc., are some of them. Despite the fact that these do not imply any thinking, they are no doubt palpable processes taking place within the body. Imagine what kind of movement or vibration should be taking place in the mind in order that these feelings and emotions may be evoked !

When a thought rises, I feel it creates a reaction in the whole of the mind and the body. The reaction is something like what you see in a pond when a stone is thrown into it. The impact produces a number of circular waves around the point where the stone falls. Again, think of an air bubble getting formed somewhere beneath the surface of water. The bubble will naturally push itself upward.

The production of a thought or emotion in our consciousness has a similar effect. If anything, it is only more important and far-reaching in its effect. The effects produced by the mental system by virtue of its activities are both physical and psychical. When 'inimical thoughts' surge up in your mind, your face instantly changes its expression. In the same way, 'affectionate thoughts' produce a corresponding expression on the eyes, cheek, etc. I know of an instance wherein a habitually patient man once went into a rage. The result was his blood was almost boiling. Soon thereafter, he became a prey to disease. These are sufficient facts for any one to conclude that thinking has a deep effect on the body. In fact, the spiritual or material effects you want to achieve in your body (bodily level) cannot be gained so much by physical measures as by mental or intellectual measures. The path of *gyana* has to be reckoned as the best and most effective of all paths, only because of its superb purificatory effect. When your thinking changes, the structure of the body too follows suit. Krishna himself has said in the Geetha:

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते।

Na hi jnanena sadrisam pavithram iha vidyathe

There is no purifying agency as great as the pursuit of wisdom. Imagine how true is this statement on the basis of what we have said just now.

Vichara is an activity in which the mind and intellect alone are involved. That is to say, it is purely an internal activity. Being so, its effect must be the maximum. The chanting of hymns, the performance of ceremonies, etc., prescribed in the first half of the Vedas, are only bodily and oral activities, whereas the pursuit of enquiry advocated in the Upanishads are mental and intellectual. Therefore, is not the latter clearly superior to the former ? The reason why the Upanishads rate the rituals and ritualistic life as inferior must be obvious to you now. By so doing, they have not made any basic contradiction at all. They merely tell us that mental work is more effective than the physical and oral. And those who take to the mental work have the right to discard the ritualistic way of life.

When you come to the Upanishads, you find only questioning and enquiries. That means the Upanishadic activity is purely mental and intellectual. Viewed as a kind of activity, we cannot but rate it as the most valuable and purifying. It is far above the preceding two kinds of activity.

For one who takes to the Vedantic pursuits, therefore, the other pursuits prescribed in the *karma kanda* do not become necessary. Nay he has to discard them outright. As a religious pursuit, or say even as a ritual, if you consider 'ritual' as supreme, Vedantic study and practice rank the highest in value and usefulness. Do not therefore doubt the supremacy of the Vedantic life and seeking. Do not think that by renouncing the rituals and taking to Vedantic thinking, you are likely to incur any sin on any ground whatsoever. Considered in terms of virtue, Vedantic pursuits would fetch the maximum measure of it.

Gyana or *vichara* is found in the end portion of the Vedas. You will now agree that considered on the basis of its value, it must come in the end.

Coming back to the discussion of the *gyana yoga,* King Janaka once went to Sage Ashtavakra seeking spiritual instruction. He asked of the latter 'how can one get Self-knowledge and liberation'. Ashtavakra answered him:

मुक्ताभिमानी मुक्तो हि बद्धो बद्धाभिमान्यपि ।
किंवदन्तीह सत्येयं या मतिः सा गतिर्भवेत् ॥

Mukthaabhimanee muktho hi badho
badhabhimanyapi
Kimvadantheeha sathyeyam ya mathih saa
gathirbhavet

"One that thinks 'I am bound' remains so. One that thinks 'I am free' becomes free indeed. 'As one thinks, so indeed he becomes'.

This proverb is true with regard to the seeking of liberation."

The Sage here tells us that the attainment of liberation or Self-knowledge depends fully upon oneself. What you have to do is to achieve a correct knowledge of the Truth as it is, using your own powers of understanding. You may seek the guidance of a Master or a Preceptor. If you fail in doing that, your efforts are not going to succeed. Do not attribute your failure to God or the lack of His mercy.

You talk so much about God, His omnipresence and the like. But do you know the ultimate Truth that He does not do or cause anybody do anything at all ? Krishna says in the Geetha:

न कर्तृत्वं न कर्माणि लोकस्य सृजति प्रभुः ।
न कर्मफलसंयोगं स्वभावस्तु प्रवर्तते ॥

Na kartritwam na karmaani lokasya
srijathi prabhuh
Na karma-phala samyogam swabhavahsthu
pravarthathe

God, whom we consider as the one Lord of the whole universe, is not responsible for anything that you do or not do. He does not make you the 'owner' of any actions. Nor does He 'ordain' the various acts to be done by you. Again, He does not command that you should enjoy or suffer from the results of your actions. The DOS and DONTS you find in vogue are your own creation. The rule that man is bound by the result of whatever he does, is also man-made.

What is the ultimate cause of all these then? *Swabhava* is the one cause, says Krishna. The *swabhava* is the nature out of which each being has been born and which persists in that being irresistibly. It is the *swabhava* that expresses itself freely in our actions. Inspired by it, you feel 'a sense of responsibility' for whatever you have performed. You also expect a certain result from every action. Then you feel that that result will bind you in one way or the other. Thus *doership, results of acts,* and *the bondage accruing from them,* all these are your own making. The cause working behind all of them is your nature, *swabhava.* Is not this a revolving statement, one you may not have expected from the Yogacharya Krishna ?

नादत्ते कस्यचित् पापं न चैव सुकृतं विभुः ।
अज्ञानेनावृतं ज्ञानं तेन मुह्यन्ति जन्तवः ॥

Na-aadathe kasyachit paapam na chaiva
sukritham vibhuh
Ajnyaanena aavritham jnyaanam thena
muhyanthi janthavah

The Almighty does not keep any account of our sins or virtues. He does not accept either of them and absolve you from its effect. It is man himself, remaining in the fold of ignorance, that formulates the concepts of sin and virtue.

He alone imagines the consequences flowing from them. Why does he do so?

His 'knowledge', right from the beginning, is veiled by its opposite 'ignorance'. That is to say, his ability to perceive and know truths becomes hindered. Consequently, clear vision is not possible. The senses and the mind overpower his intellect so much that it is not in a position to look within. As a result, he finds himself limited by the physical body. The feeling of limitation imposed by the body makes him think that he is the cause of whatever he does. Being the cause, he thinks, he will be bound by the resultant effects of his actions. The higher aspect of his personality, which always reigns unconditioned by the doings of the senses and the mind, remains hidden from his vision. In short, it is a limitation or delusion that subjugates him throughout, in all that he does and thinks. And being so, he formulates a thousand ideas, yet fails to reach at the ultimate truth. He will not be able to set aside the delusion, remove the hindrance, until he makes a direct effort for it himself. Krishna says:

ज्ञानेन तु तदज्ञानं येषां नाशितमात्मनः।
तेषां आदित्यवत् ज्ञानं प्रकाशयति तत् परम्॥

Jnaanena thu thad-ajnaanam yeshaam
naasitham atmanah
Theshaam aadithyavat jnaanam prakaasayathi
that param

The remedy for this sad plight lies with man himself. He must reinforce his knowledge, strengthen his capacity to know and perceive truths. He has to rouse his intellect from its habitual drowsiness. He has to teach and train it for perceiving the subtle things. For that, he must culture knowledge as much as possible, as he will polish a brass or copper vessel. In that process, the ignorance which clouds the intellect, the delusion which limits the vision, will have to give place. You will then gain the capacity to see things clearly. The subtle things like mind, consciousness, etc., will start coming to your notice. And when the intellect in the end becomes sharp and penetrating, your knowledge too will swell, it will become deeper and more extensive, and with that the ultimate Reality (*that param*) will be perceived and realized directly. Thereafter, as I said earlier, holding on to that truth considering it as a *nishtha* (purificatory discipline), you should burn off all impurities. For removing impurities, there is nothing more powerful than the pursuit of spiritual wisdom.

तत् बुद्धयस्तदात्मानः तन्निष्ठास्तत्परायणाः ।
गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषाः ॥

Tat budhayastadatmaanaha tannishtasthat-
parayanaaha
Gachhantyapunaravruttih jnananir-
dhutakalmashaha

Ignorance is the root cause of all wrongs. It can be undone only by its opposite, namely knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge will make you holy and in the end you will transcend birth and death for ever.

Here again, the real process is one of *jnana*. Progress is through the increase of wisdom. The gaining of knowledge fully depends upon you, your intelligent efforts.

As for the lines of enquiry or *vichara* to be pursued for gaining purity as well as knowledge, they may be one of the following three:

कोऽहं कथमिदं जातं को वै कर्तास्य विद्यते ।
उपादानं किमस्तीह विचारः सोऽयमीदृशः ॥

Koham kathamidam jaatham ko vai
karthaasya vidyathe
Upaadaanam kim-ashteeha vicharaha
soyam-eedrisaha

What am I? This is one line of enquiry. The second is—how has all this been born? How is the world we see before us, made? The third is—who is the world's creator?

Of what substance is the universe made or manufactured?

You can take one or the other of these three and pursue it until the end. It will then take you to the Truth. All these enquiries are useful enough to engage your intellect, sharpen and refine it and finally enable it to realize the truth.

The 'who am I' question, I have already analysed at length on the second day of these talks. You already know how the 'I', the eternal subject in us, is different from the body, mind, etc., and how the attempt to trace it takes you to the source of Consciousness. This 'I' or Consciousness, I said, is the real creator of the entire world.

Coming to the third question 'what is the world made of', it is very pertinent. The world, as we see it, consists of a number of things, different from each other in appearance and qualities. Water is different from earth. Air is different from both water and earth. And so on. But on analysis we find that even water is a combination of two of the components of air. So it would appear that the same thing manifests in two different forms with differing properties. Is it true, therefore, that the entire world products have been evolved out of one basic substance? If so, what is that basic substance? ....

Clay, we know, is made use of for manufacturing so many kinds of pots. The pots so manufactured differ from one another, but all of them contain clay as their substance and nothing else. The material cause of the pots is thus only one, clay. Can we apply this truth to the making of the world, too?

The world, in its created state, must be the same substance with which it has been made, as is the case with the ornament made of gold. The

Sastras too say that the world is born of Brahman, and it is Brahman even now, in its manifest condition. Sankara puts it:

सुवर्णात् जायमानस्य सुवर्णत्वं च शाश्वतम् ।
ब्रह्मणो जायमानस्य ब्रह्मत्वं च तथा भवेत् ॥

Suvarnaat-jaayamaanasya suvarnatwam
cha saaswatham
Brahmano jaayamanasya Brahmatwam
cha thathaa bhavet

Begin to think on these lines. Then, you will be knowingly and unknowingly trying to perceive the entire world as Brahman. But such a perception may not come true all of a sudden.

So many adverse trends will fight you from within. The reason for it is the basic ignorance which you carry right from birth. Hence, the effort must be to fight the ignorance out. And for that you will have to seek the assistance of knowledge, wisdom. This wisdom is supplied by the Upanishads and by the Geetha. You need not produce it anew. It is there already. You only need to possess it, make use of it. The method to gain wisdom, says Vedanta, is repeated listening to the wisdom. In olden days, there was only listening, not so much of writing and reading. The spiritual lessons used to be imparted by the Teacher to the Students, and that oral exchange was the entire basis upon which the spiritual life and fulfilment rested.

'Listen' repeatedly, until you are convinced about the goal you have to reach, to realize. Thereupon, ruminate over what you have heard. This part is called manana or meditation. Listening or reading, without rumination is not fruitful. Many sadhakas fail to have the desired progress in their spiritual life because they lack in doing *manana*. *Manana* is very important. When both *sravana* (listening and *manana* are adequately had, they are enough to purify your mind and intellect. No other means is required to make you fit for getting illumination. The votaries of the *karma* and *bhakthi* paths achieve purity of mind through the performance of *karma* or the devotional exercises. But the *jnana-sadhaka* achieves it through the pursuit of his sadhana, namely *sravana* and *manana*. You can call them K '*vichara*' also. As I told you already, *sravana* as well as *manana* or *vichara*, being mental activity, is the most effective *sadhana*.

Vasishta speaks very highly of *sravana* during his dialogue with Sri Rama. For doing *sravana*, you must go to the Holy Souls, the knowers of Truth. They are called *Sajjanas* or *Satpurushas*. Keeping company with them is always highly enriching.

यः स्नातः शीतसितया साधुसंगमगंगया ।
किं तस्य दानैः किं तीर्थैः किं तपोभिः किमध्वरैः ॥
Yah snaathaha seetha-sithayaa sadhu-
samgama-gangaya
Kim thasya daanaihi kim theerthaihi kim
thapobhihi kim adhwaraihi

Suppose you plunge into the waters of *Sat-sanga* and become refreshed, then little do you need to perform any other purificatory acts like offering of *daana* (gifts), taking bath in holy waters, doing of *tapasya* (penance), performing of yagna or yaga, etc. The one purpose of all these religious acts is to bring purity to the mind and refinement to the intellect. *Sat-sanga* by itself provides you with an ample measure of these. Where does the question of doing other purificatory rites arise then?

Bhagavatha speaks even more pointedly about the purity which one derives by seeing Sadhus (holy souls) and by listening to them:

न ह्यम्मयानि तीर्थानि न देवा मृच्छिलामयाः ।
ते पुनन्त्युरुकालेन दर्शनादेव साधवः ॥

Na hi-ammayaani theerthaani na deva
mrichchila-mayaaha
The punanthi-urukaalena darsanaadeva
saadavaha

Do not think that the waters are the *theerthaas* (purifying sources) and the images of idols made of clay, wood and the like are Gods. If you worship them for a number of years, you may be able to achieve an extent of purity, but that is not because of their merit or power. It is due to your own piety, devotion and sincerity. Suppose, on the other hand, you go to a Holy Soul and be in his company for a time, you are bound to feel a sense of divine elation and purification.

It is so because the holy soul carries within him a divine aura, which has the effect of purifying those who go to him.

If the waters and idols really have their intrinsic powers of purification, then they should be able to infuse into you purity, just when you dip in them or see them but once. But this never happens.

The Mahatmas, God-realised souls, will always have only the spiritual and Vedantic truths to tell you. The Vedantic truths are such that they awaken you to the truth of your innate nature, which is pure and unbound. Vedanta does not ask you to stop for any time or to go through a series of rituals in order to lead you to your goal. On the contrary, all at once it reminds you of the truth that you are the soul and not the body. As a soul you have no dependence upon anything. Nothing but your own mind can bind you or make you impure. If you get away from the clutches of the mind, then itself will freedom be realized. This process knows no waiting or seeks no sanction, except those you cause yourself.

Only the Mahatmas will tell you boldly and with a voice of confidence about all these. The waters will not. The idols too will not. This is the difference between the speaking and loving Gods, the living Gods on earth—the Mahatmas—and the waters and idols you worship. It is the beloved Krishna that tells us of this cardinal spiritual truth. Who can dismiss his statement? Who can doubt it ever?

You should not think that those who get up very early in the morning, go to temples, do poojas or other ceremonies daily are the only people devoted to religion and religious life. Religious life, in the true sense of the term, can be of different kinds. I have already told you about the various paths, particularly about the *karma* and *bhakthi sadhanas*. *Sankhya* path is one of them. By *sankhya* is meant the *vichara* sadhana, or the path of *jnana*. There are other forms of sadhana also, like Raja Yoga, Pranayama, etc. In the fourth chapter of Geetha, Krishna describes a number of Yoga paths, calling them 'yagnas'. He says all those who are devoted to any one of these paths, become holy and pure-minded, by virtue of their devotion and effort. But in the end, all of them will have to attain *jnana and* through *jnana* alone seek fulfilment.

The *vichara sadhana* is more suited to the modern world than the others. There are a number of educated and well-placed people among you. They may or may not have the time to observe any routine religious life daily. All the same, they may have full respect, faith and love for your religion and the benefits it promises. The path of *vichara* will be the best for them to adopt. With the learning and love for knowledge you possess, the *vichara* path must be appealing to you immensely. The spiritual truths disclosed in the Upanishads cannot but impress you greatly. A seeker of any kind of knowledge cannot afford to neglect the Upanishads and the Vedantic way of life, which is only another name for 'the seeking of knowledge'.

Let the seekers of knowledge take to the study of the Upanishads with all love and *sradhdha*. After understanding the truths discussed in them, do not fail to ruminate upon them. A few days or months of practice is bound to convince you of the ephemeral nature of the world and the eternal nature of the *chetana* (consciousness) animating your body. The 'I' in you will surely impress you as the nonchanging Reality. Following this conviction, you will be induced to take up systematic *vichara* or enquiry. The effort to practice meditation will automatically follow. What more do you want? About meditation I shall speak tomorrow.

Before concluding, I must again remind you that in the *vichara* or *jnana* path, the factor you should bank upon always, the factor to which you should remain devoted constantly, *jnana,* the gaining and the maintenance of it. This jnana can be summarized thus:

1. The world by its very nature is changeful, and hence has to be regarded as unreal.
2. The real, as far as we can see, is the *chetana* animating the body, the existence of which is self-evident. 'I' is the notion which points to the real nature of the consciousness.
3. Our life, if it has to succeed and fulfil itself, must aim at discovering the 'I', or the

Chetana, so that we can make it the one object of our pursuit throughout life.

4. The discovery of the 'I' will instantly lead you to seek permanent union with it. That permanent union, by its very nature, will provide you with peace, blessedness and wisdom.

The long and short of the entire discussion is that the foremost place must be given to the acquisition of knowledge, not of objects. Acquisition of true wisdom at once implies the gaining *of the eternal,* too. It is through knowledge that real gain is had. The *real* abides within us, not without. Hence the pursuit of external objects is not of so much consequence to us. We must take to it to the extent necessary, not more than that. You must lean upon the Vedantic knowledge to remove all unwelcome tendencies and habits from your mind and body. Think that "I am not the body, but the soul, peaceful and blessed to the core. Why should I run after the fleeting externals then, no matter whether they are wealth, women or fame? Compared to the Self, all these are trifles, useless, troublesome and painful." Thoughts of this nature, when pursued in your mind, will purify you, sharpen your power of understanding, create dispassion and infuse yearning for liberation.

For the true knower of truth, there will be a thorough change of perception. What he sees and lives in, will no more be the world of objects and miseries. It will be the extended or manifest form of his own Self, the Brahman. Sankara describes that state of a Knower in a verse:

ब्रह्मप्रत्ययसन्ततिर्जगदतो ब्रह्मैव सत् सर्वतः
पश्याध्यमात्मदृशा प्रशान्तमनसा सर्वास्ववस्थास्वपि ।
रूपादन्यदवेक्षितं किमभितश्चक्षुस्मतां दृश्यते
तद्वद् ब्रह्मविदः सतः किमपरं बुद्धेर्विहारास्पदम् ॥

Brahmapratyaya santhathirjagadatho
Brahmaiva sat sarvathaha
Pasyadhyamathmadrisaa prasaantha-
manasaa sarvaasvavasthaasvapi
Rupaadanyadavekshitham Kimabhetascha-
kshushmathaam drisyathe
Tadvad brahmavidaha sathaha kimaparam
Budhervihaaraaspadam ||

The world is born of Brahman, viewed intellectually. Hence it must be Brahman now in its born-state as well. Glimpse this truth always, and visualize the whole world as Brahman itself, under all conditions. For that, you should cultivate the habit of abiding in yourself, remaining tied to your within. Keep the mind unruffled by desires, hatred, fear and the like. When the mind remains peaceful, the soul-vision will be unhindered. It is agitation of the mind that disturbs the spiritual vision. The hindrances to a jnana-sadhaka always come from his mind, from within him, not from without. The key to spiritual success lies in keeping the mind pure, peaceful and composed.

For one who looks at the world through his eyes, is there anything in it other than colour? In the same way, for the knower of truth, who keeps the vision of truth in his *budhdhi* always, will there be anything other than Brahman anywhere ? The eye sees colour everywhere. So does the *budhdhi* see Brahman everywhere.. The Brahmic vision is as true of the *budhdhi* as the colourful vision of the eye.

This, in short, dear souls, is the course of the *vichara sadhana* or the *jnana* path. It is quite simple and straightforward for those who can understand its science. You must be bold and open minded. You should not keep a conditioned mind. Think that you are the children of the God, and as such you are more free with Him than anyone else. The fear complex must leave you completely. Why should you fear Him who has given birth to you and who looks after you at all times ? Even the good and bad in you are, truly viewed, His. Surrender all that you have to Him with an innocent mind, and then seek to know Him and become one with Him. Nothing short of absolute identity, full knowledge and realization, should be your ideal. If you resolve this way, then the pursuit of the *jnana* path is the simplest and best.

6th day's talk: *27th Feb. 1970*

MEDITATION AND LIFE

'Meditation and Life' is the subject for our talk this evening. I have been told that this subject is specially interesting to many of you. I am happy about it. Some of you, I find, have come specially for hearing me talk on meditation and its practice. This only shows how much of interest Vedantic study and practice have evoked in the minds of modern people.

Before describing the process of meditation, I want to remind you of the basis of our entire discussion during these few days.

Our life is, as we have already seen, one which constantly seeks union, externally through the senses and internally through the mind, with things objective and subjective. But the hard fact remains that in the process, no one of the 'unions' we achieve is able to persist for long. Rather no union is able to endure for long. This is no fault of ours, because both we and the things with which we get united each time are impermanent by nature. As long as their impermanent fate remains, we cannot have any prospect of effecting a permanent union.

But a critical study of our personality reveals to us the presence of something permanent. That something is inside us, not outside. We are able to locate its presence through the 'I', which is a constant revelation in us, for us.

Thus, it is clear that our one object must be to get at the permanent 'I' inside our personality and to remain ever in that, in union with it. This is our spiritual goal. Nay it is the only way for us to get peace, freedom and joy, judged by any standard.

But the process is not so simple and short-ranged. It involves enough of time, exertion and preparation. For this reason it becomes necessary for us to take recourse to one or another life-long *sadhana,* like *karma-yoga, bhakthi-yoga* or *gyana-yoga.* But whatever be such *sadhana,* meditation is its climax. Besides being the climax of each form of *sadhana, dhyana-yoga* can be a complete path, by itself. I told you the other day:

> ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति
>
> केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।।
>
> *Dhyaanena atmani pasyanthi*
> *Kechit-aatmaanam aatmana—(Geetha)*

By practising meditation itself as a form of *sadhana,* your intellect will become sharp and purified, and in the end it will derive the capacity to perceive the Self, the most subtle thing in the whole world. Here you find *dhyana* (meditation) described as an independent *yoga* or means of pursuit.

Why should meditation, besides being a path by itself, be the pinnacle or fulfilling factor, or say the last phase, of the Vedantic practices, of the different kinds of *sadhana* ? This question should be considered. In answer, I shall first explain to you the nature and kinds of knowledge, which we make use of in our life.

Knowledge is the outcome of our experience in life. These experiences are in the first place brought about by the working of the external instruments, of perception, which are five in number. These instruments, called the senses, have the power to perceive or experience the things existing in the outside world. Their power is strictly limited in that they are unable to perceive anything inside the body. In other words, their nature is out-going and only that. That is to say, if you have to perceive anything situate outside, you have to use the senses, one or more of them. Conversely, all that exist outside you, are a subject—or an object—for the senses so far as their perception by you is concerned. On this ground, the external objects are called '*pratyaksha*'. *Pratyaksha means* 'that which is opposite or against the eye'. (Here eye denotes all the five senses). The knowledge thus gained by means of the senses is called *pratyaksha* knowledge.

Different from the *pratyaksha* knowledge is the *paroksha* knowledge. In this you will find that the word *para* has been used in place of *prathi* ; *aksha* remaining the same.

Paroksha knowledge refers to the knowledge of such things which are not *prathi-aksha,* which are not objects for the senses. In other words, the objects involved are not sensible, they do not remain within the range of the senses. In working out this kind of knowledge, senses are powerless. Some factor other than the senses is at work in effecting the *paroksha* knowledge.

What is there in you, besides the senses, by the function of which knowledge is derived ? The senses themselves, you know, are inert. They are like the chisel in the carpenter's hand, in bringing about external perception. The real agency which makes them work, like the carpenter, is the *anthah-karana* (generally called the mind) on the *chetana* within the body. In gaining knowledge of the outer things, the mind or the *anthah-karana* spreads out through the senses, and then, helped by the senses, gains the knowledge.

But the mind can work without spreading out through the senses. In fact, in the *paroksha* perceptions or knowledge, it is the independent work of the mind that brings results. There are many facts and figures which will not become subject to the senses. Nevertheless, we gain knowledge of them. How ? By infering, by comparing and contrasting, and then arriving at deductions. In such cases, is not the mind working all by itself ? Take, for instance, the case of your knowledge about your own father and mother. You certainly did not witness your own birth! Yet you feel so sure as to who your parents are.

Truly speaking, this is a case of *paroksha* knowledge, or inference, although this truth is seldom recognized. The need and scope of *paroksha* knowledge in our life cannot be under-rated.

So, in short, *paroksha* knowledge denotes inference, or the results produced by the process of thinking. The point to be noted is that in effecting the *pratyaksha* knowledge, it is the senses that work. Whereas in the matter of *paroksha,* what works is the *anthah-karana* (the mind and the intellect). The first is an outer function ; the second is inner.

Different from both these—*pratyaksha* and *paroksha* kinds—is another perception, which concerns us most. About this third kind of knowledge, our Seers of old had a very clear idea. You find it mentioned in several places of our Scriptures. This third kind is called *aparoksha.* In order to understand the *aparoksha* knowledge, the way in which it takes place, you have to analyse the word '*a paroksha.*' The letter and sound '*a*' means 'not' and denotes negation. It has been prefixed to '*paroksha*'. The word *paroksha* itself implies the non-use of the senses. By further negating the *paroksha* (the non-use of the mind and intellect), the absence of thinking, nay of all the functions of the *chitha,* is meant.

Thus in working out the *a paroksha* knowledge, the senses and the mind, the external and internal instruments of perception, including the *budhdhi* and whatever other knowledge producing agency is there—all these must be at a standstill: they should not be at work at all. What perception will be had in such a state, that is called *a proksha.* It means '*direct perception.*' The perception then taking place will be direct for the reason that no function, which is likely to produce some kind of indirectness or the other, some kind of conditioning or the other, takes place either outwardly at the level of the senses or inwardly at the level of the *anthah-karana.* Whatever revelation or knowledge comes to you will be something natural, effortless and unconditioned. *Aparoksha-anubhoothi* thus denotes direct, unprocessed and spontaneous realization or knowledge.

You may wonder whether there can be such a kind of experience. Yes, there can be. There is. And that is what you will have to gain in your search for Truth, in seeking liberation or God-vision or Self-knowledge. Nothing short of it will serve your purpose.

I can give you a clue about the possibility of such a 'direct experience.' Take the case of a thought or feeling or emotion arising in you any time. The moment it surges up, you know it, intuit it. But how ? You do not see the thought, through any one of the senses. Nor does any kind of thinking or mentation takes place in order to know the entry of a thought. The sight of a tiger in a forest suddenly evokes a sentiment of fear in your mind. How is this sentiment felt by you ? Is it by any process of intellectual action or the like ?

Actually, it is a case of natural and sudden awareness. In fact, I should say that all knowledge is produced by our *anthah-karana,* by the consciousness animating the body, *naturally* and *suddenly.* The trouble is that no one understands it to be so.

What happens generally is that the moment a reaction, thought or sentiment grips us, we proceed to act upon it and its effect takes us along. And we do not care at any time to know the nature of the knowledge or the knowing function itself. Much less do we care to understand what exactly the substance called 'consciousness' is, in spite of the fact that it is the thing basic in our life and movements. The effort at *Vedantic Sadhana* is no other than the practical attempt to go into the mystery of consciousness and know its nature and powers. When you gain the *aparoksha-anubhoothi,* you will in fact be coming face to face with the *knower* in you, with the sentient substance which dwells in your body, with the *chetana* or consciousness. That communion will not be anything simple or minor. Its impact will be marvellous in moulding or changing your vision, insight and ideals. I do not say anything further, but leave the matter for you to experience directly.

The permanent factor or base in us, we have already seen, is the 'I'. This 'I' does not denote the body or its parts. Nor is it anything like the mind or intellect. It is the base of all these, of everything outer and inner.

While you say 'I', what you do is to communicate it. You are by so doing, vocalising the 'I' real. You have, by your utterance, radiated it through the mouth in the form of a sound. Similarly when you think of the 'I', you are again mentalizing or mentating it. And when you probe or enquire into it, you are intellectualising it. Is any of these your aim, while doing *Vedanta Sadhana* ? Your aim is to reach at the 'I' proper, transcending the oral, mental and intellectual levels. Evidently, that can be done only by rising above the functions of (1) the senses (2) the *anthah-karana* (external and internal functions). For whenever either of these two works, the 'I' would get '*involved*'. Whereas our object is to get it freed from all involvements, and then be alone by itself. It is on this score that the *aparoksha*—effort becomes indispensable.

If you do Vedantic *sadhana,* your aim must be very clear. It should be for gaining the *aparoksha-sakshatkara* (direct realization of the 'I'). Vedanta does not discuss the Ultimate Reality, Brahman, just for the sake of satisfying the curiosity of our intellect or for deriving the delight of discussion. Vedantic enquiry is highly pragmatic. It is intended to take the enquirer to the subjective realm of his own personality, to the 'I' within him, and thereupon to make him realize it first hand. It is for this purpose that Vedanta describes the Reality and its relation with man as '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' (the 'I' in each person is itself 'the Reality' in truth). In pinpointing the Ultimate Reality thus, i.e., as the 'I' in us, Vedanta becomes an irrefutable philosophy.

You can say that the world's existence is itself fallacious. You can also say that there is no God or Creator . But you cannot say the same about yourself, about the existence of the 'I' in you. There are states or moments when you forget everything like the body and mind, but yet you do not forget yourself. Even when you start doubting or negating the world, God, etc., you do so taking your stand on yourself, on the 'I' in you. How can you doubt the doubter in you ? How can the negator negate his own existence ? So, there may be several views, affirmative and negative, about the world's existence, its real nature, about God, His powers and the like. But about the 'I' of each person, about its existence, there cannot be any such thing. That is why Vedanta finally takes up the search for the Atman, for the Self, in preference to other searches

About the Atman, Vedanta says it is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. It becomes the *Sat* because of its unnegatability and its ever-existingness. *Sat* is that which exists all through, unassailed by any conditions, time or place. It is that which exists independently, not aided by any second factor. See for yourselves whether the 'I' in you fulfils this condition.

The second description is that it is the *chit*. *Chit* refers to that which beams as *awareness* or *knowledge*. While *Sat* refers to the existence of a thing, *chit* refers to its revelation, or the power of it to reveal itself. The 'I' in you comes to light all by itself. Did any body tell you about your own existence ? Was it necessary either ? In the state of sleep or a swoon, does the 'I' ever go out of sight ? Actually, it is the 'I' which endures itself surviving all such unconscious states, to report to you about them all. The *knowing* of the ignorant or inactive states like sleep and swooning, is because of the mysterious power of knowledge, which the Self in you holds within itself. That is why we speak of it as self-revealing.

Think of the light coming from a luminous electric bulb. The illumination comes to your knowledge, not by itself but through the medium or agency of your eye, which is one of the five senses of external perception. Suppose the light is there, but your eyes are either blind or defective, then you will not be able to glimpse it. Thus the perception of the external illumination fully depends upon the eye. But this is not the case with the perception of the 'I'.

The 'I' perception will be there even in the absence of everything else. It is independent and ever-persisting. Neither the mind nor the senses have anything to do in the matter of revealing the 'I', Atma. On the other hand, everything like the mind, intellect, etc. within, and the body, senses, etc. without, comes to your knowledge only in the presence of the Self-revealing 'I' beaming within you always. The 'I' on its part never loses its power of revelation any time. This basic self-revealing feature of the Atma you should always bear in mind while doing the *Vedantic sadhana*.

The constant self-revealing nature of the 'I' makes it the *chit*, the source of awareness or knowledge.

The third description is that the Atma is *ananda*. It denotes the kind of experience that comes to one when he realizes the Atma. Anything we come to experience as far as our ordinary reaction and knowledge go, will give us a pleasant feeling or sensation, or, alternatively, an unpleasant one. Judged on this basis, is the realization of the Atma a thing pleasant or unpleasant ?

To this question is the answer implied in the word '*ananda*'. The experience of the Self results in a condition or effect which is peaceful and auspicious. Peacefulness or auspiciousness is not just the happiness, pleasantness or delight we come across during the course of our life and inter-course with the world. It is something far beyond and different. If you want to describe it that way, we can say that self-experience is happiness or delight not associated with any kind of troubles or anxieties, which are inevitable in our life and which are incidental to the worldly activities.

For instance, take the case of a son born to a man, who has been desiring for an issue. That birth will certainly be delightful to the father and mother. I think nobody will contend that this is not so. But all of you will agree that this delightful event brings with it a series of attendant troubles and discontent. First the mother has to suffer the pains of confinement. Then there are the frequent upsets to the child's health, growth, etc. Finally, when the child becomes a youth, he may easily turn disobedient. His likes and aims may differ greatly from the wishes of the parents. Various quarrels may ensue. So on and so forth. This is what I mean by saying that all the delights of the world are associated with some misery and trouble or the other.

Compared to this plight, the peacefulness you derive on realising the Atma, the Ultimate Reality, is superb, nay supra-worldly. That is why you often hear it described as '*transcendental beatitude*' and the like. Whatever be the words used for describing it, you should have a clear conception of the way in which it differs from worldly experiences and delights.

To reach at the 'I', the Atman, and thereby to derive the experience of *sat-chit-ananda,* a definite method of procedure, called *sadhana,* is essential. Why is not man able to realize his Self, in spite of the fact that it exists in him constantly ?

After getting born, we have constantly been in contact with the outside objects. Through the five senses fixed on the body, the mind or *chetana* (consciousness) spreads or radiates, and as a result the world and objects outside are sensed. Thus every moment since our birth, sensations—reports of the outside things—ingrain themselves in the mind. Once this happens, the mind becomes forced to think always on the basis of the sensations. Consequently we are unable to outlive the sensory effects and then try to look at the things as they are, in their true nature of existence This is a natural defect experienced by all born beings. Nobody is to be blamed for this plight.

With a view to outliving the sensory effects or dominance, suppose you start deliberately forgetting them, then your progress will be harder. Because any attempt to forget a thing will only add force to its memory.

Once there was a king, who suffered badly from stomach ache. Many doctors treated him, but with no success. The king got tired of the disease as well as the treatment. At last he declared that any one who wished to treat the disease could do so only at the risk of losing his head. If he failed to cure the disease, then his head would be cut off. Should he succeed in curing it, then he would be awarded valuable presents. This new challenge kept away most of the doctors. Some who genuinely desired to cure the king were afraid and doubtful.

Finally, it occurred to an Ayurvedic doctor to step in to the palace and offer his services. The king gave him audience, but after reminding him of the risk. The Kaviraj examined the king, questioned him adequately and then prescribed a medicine, promising that it would cure the disorder in the stomach. He offered to prepare the medicine himself and give it to the king. But he stipulated one condition to be strictly adhered to, while taking the medicine. It was that the patient should not remember 'the monkey'. The king took it lightly and promised that he would not remember the monkey at the time of taking the medicine. The Kaviraj departed.

In a week's time the medicine was prepared and sent to the palace. The king saw it and decided to begin the treatment from the next morning. Accordingly his servant brought the first dose in a glass. The king received it and when he was about to pour it into his mouth, he suddenly remembered the condition stipulated by the doctor 'do not remember the monkey'. This meant a memory of the animal, which was the exact thing to be avoided. The king returned the glass asking that it be brought after an hour. When the medicine was given to him the next hour, again the monkey daunted the king's mind, this time with greater alertness. The king was obliged to return the glass. He tried to take in the medicine again, but failed miserably. The more and more he tried to forget the monkey, the greater and greater became the force of its memory. This is the plight of all our attempts to forget a thing.

This rule applies to any attempt of ours to forget the sensory effects or impressions, with which our life begins on earth and on which it subsists. What is the nature of the sensations, so far as their impact on the Vedantic enquiry and *sadhana* is concerned ? The senses are five in all, and each of these five brings in a variety of distinctions about the world objects. The eye brings in the idea of several colours, the nose of smells, the ear of sounds, etc. Thus the notions brought in by all of them are '*plural*' in their nature. As against the influence of this *pluralness* the truth you have to reach at and realize is '*single*'. That is to say you have to work your way from *pluralness* to *singleness*. See how opposed they are ! Again, this truth of *singleness* is expressed as '*Aham Brahma-asmi*'. That is, your self or 'I' is that. This would mean that you are in truth the Atma, not the body. But as far as your present awareness or conviction goes, it is that you are the body, not the Atma. This again therefore implies an opposition, in so far as your way to reach the truth is concerned. How can the notion of pluralness and the idea of the body be displaced or outlived is thus the question before the *sadhaka*.

In the matter of displacing the wrong ideas—*pluralness* and *body-ness*—we have clearly found that deliberate forgetting is not the means. What else can be the sadhana then? The answer is that you should repeatedly remember the truth, the truth as enunciated in Vedanta. This process of remembrance is called '*Vichara*' or better *anusamdhaana*. The *vichara* or *anusamdhaana* must be of the Ultimate Truth, as it is understood by you, on the basis of the discussions we have had so far. Vedanta has coined its own chosen phrases for the purpose, which are called *Mahaa-vaakyaas*. Of the *Mahavaakyaas*, the one which denotes *the oneness of the Self and Brahman* should be used for *anusamdhaana*. Such *anusamdhaana* will mean *eka-chintana, chintana* (remembrance) of the *eka* (of the single truth). By doing the *eka-chintana,* you will be treating the mind with the idea of oneness. Such treating will have the effect of overcoming the plural idea, ingrained in the mind right from the birth. This is a very subtle but great psychological device, besides being a spiritual principle or path. Its influence on the mind is magical.

Vichara can be done in many ways. But while doing Vedantic meditation, it has to be of a specific kind. Here there is no scope for allowing the mind to deflect this way or that, with this thought or that. Altogether you must have only one thought and that one is that '*you are the Atma in truth.*' If the thought you select is a lengthy one, in between the words contained in it there will be interruptions of other thoughts. For avoiding such interruptions, we should select a thought (for *anusamdhaana*) with the minimum possible letters, yet suggestive of the ultimate truth. '*Soham*' is one such *mantra* spiritual idea). It is a Sanskrit word, which means 'the Infinite Reality is I'. '*Bodhoham*' is another word-which signifies that 'I am of the nature of awareness'. There are other mantras also. For spiritual reasons I should not divulge them. At the same time, I must explain the subject as fully as possible. That is why I have mentioned at least two of the *mantras*.

'AUM' is more a symbol than a *mantra*. A *mantra* must distinctly contain an idea. In this case the idea must be one denoting the supreme truth of Vedanta (*Aham Brahma-asmi.*) That is why mantras like '*soham*' become inevitable.

The revolving of such *mantra* in the mind continuously without interruption becomes *Vedantic* meditation or *nididhyasana*. In *Aparoksha-anubhoothi,* a composition of Sankara, there is the following verse:

ब्रह्मैवास्मीति सद्वृत्या निरालंबतया स्थितिः ।
ध्यानशब्देन विख्याता परमानन्ददायिनी ॥

Bramaivaa-smi-ithi sad-vrithyaa
Niraalambathayaa sthithih
Dhyaana sabdena vikhyaathaa
Paramaananda-daayinee

The thought 'Brahman is my self' is the *sad-vrithi*. *Vrithi* means thought or idea. *Sad-vrithi* is that *vrithi* which relates to Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. You should go on revolving the *sad-vrithi* in the mind so fervently that no other *vrithi* (thought) intrudes in the process. Normally the mind will be full with world ideas and thoughts. Hence, while the *sad-vrithi* practice is done, by its force and intensity, the world ideas will get displaced and a world-free state will be obtained in the mind. Such a world-free state of the mind is spoken of here as *niraalamba sthithi*. In other words, the *sad-vrithi* will abide in the mind exclusively, without any interruption. Then it is that you get established in meditation . Such *sad-vrithi* practice is itself very pleasant and peaceful. The world-ideas always make the mind congested and painful. When that saturation is removed, that very removing will bring freedom from pain and peace.

But understand that you are yet in *dhyaana,* meditation. Meditation is only a preparatory stage. It is an effort, a means. The end lies far off. It will take sometime for you to get established even in meditation. Initially there will be intense interruption. Gradually the interruption will thin off and finally it will be absent for short periods and later for longer durations.

From such meditation, you have to pass on to the stage of *samaadhi,* which is in a way the goal for the time being. Even when the *sad-vrithi* or *Brahma-chintana* becomes exclusive, you will not be able to know the Self. The *sad-vrithi* too is a thought, and hence what you can know then is at best that thought or the thinking process or is your aim knowing the thinking process or thoughts? No. It is to know the Self, which is in fact the cause of the entire thinking process and thoughts. In other words, you want to reach at the pure *chetana* (consciousness), the unmodified *chitta* (the stuff of the mind). The *vrithi* or *thought* arising in the mind is an effect produced by the pure *chetana.* In producing a *thought,* therefore, the *chetana* undergoes a transformation or modification. Thus the unmodified state is distinctly different from even *Brahma-chintana* stage, or the *sad-vrithi* state.

The manner in which you reach the unmodified *chetana* is described in the next verse of the *Aparoksha-anubhoothi,* which runs thus:

निर्विकारतया वृत्या ब्रह्माकारतया पुनः ।
वृत्तिविस्मरणं सम्यक् समाधिर्ज्ञानसंज्ञकः ॥

Nirvikaarathaya vrithyaa
Brahma-kaarathayaa punaha
Vrithi-vismaranam samyak
samadhirjnaanasamjnakaha

When you are able to retain the *Brahma vrithi* successfully without interruption, very soon a state of *vrithi-vismarana* will follow. That is to say, even the *Brahma-vrithi* will fall off and a peculiar transcendental state will surge up. The difference between that and the meditative state is:

In meditation—one thought remains exclusively.

Whereas in *samadhi*—even that thought vanishes, and the *chetana* shines in its own natural, lonely, unmodified state.

When a thought surges up in you, it immediately makes you aware of the idea which it denotes. Thus thought is always associated with *ideation*. If you see a form within, that is if the mind figurates, then you will be caught up in its contemplation. Both ideation and figuration, thought and figure, produced within are effects or modification of the *chetana,* like the pot of clay. Hence, during the incidence of thought or figure (while doing meditation) you will, if at all, be taken to a knowledge of them (the modifications), and to a knowledge of the unmodified state or pure *chetana*.

When you look at a pot made of clay, it is the knowledge of the pot—as different from that of its source, the clay, that spontaneouly grips you. Similarly, when you look at a thought or figure, it is the knowledge of it (the thought or figure) that will spontaneously grip your intellect. And you will not derive the knowledge of your Self, the source of all thoughts and figurations. It is for this reason that we say you should work for getting into the unthinking state, the *vrithi-vismarana* state.

Reaching at the *vrithi*-free state must be effortless and natural. Until such time, you will have to persist with the *Brahmavrithi* practice. When it so becomes, you will have reached a considerable measure of success in your *sadhana*.

But I have to give you a warning: It is quite likely that you go into a state of *laya* or *jada samaadhi*—the inert state. You will find it to be a very good state, wherein you can forget everything—the worldly worries and the like. On this ground, you are likely to take it to be a very successful state of meditation. But let me warn you that it is just the opposite of *gyana-samaadhi* (the better word will be *chaitanya-samadhi*ı. *Jada-samaadhi,* for the simple reason that it is one of *jadatwa* (inertness or unconsciousness), is like sleep so far as its effect on the mind and *budhdhi* goes. It is as self-forgetting as our sleep-state. By entering into a self-forgetting state, how can you hope to have any knowledge? Does sleep help you to know the Self? In the same way, *jada-samadhi* or any other similar condition will also be helpless for knowing the Atma. Make no mistake about the matter.

Aparoksha-anubhoothi describes the state of *vrithi-less chetana state as akritrima-ananda,* uncaused bliss. You will have to practice this blissful state or *chaitanya samaadhi* repeatedly, as long as possible each time, until you feel sure that your spiritual thirst is fully quenched. Every time you enter that state, your knowledge and realization will become stronger. Also your mastery over it will increase. Finally, you must reach such a state of perfection or mastery, whereby you will be able to bring in that state of naturalness and blissfulness any time you want, no matter whether you are at work or in the household.

Before concluding, let me quote a verse from *Satasloki,* a Vedantic composition of Sankara, which may perhaps help you to understand the state of *samaadhi*:

आश्लिष्यात्मानमात्मा न किमपि सहसैवान्तरं वेद बाह्यं
यद्वत् कामी विदेशात् सदनमुपगतो गाढमाश्लिष्य कान्तां ।
यात्यस्तं तत्र लोकव्यवहृतिरखिला पुण्यपापानुबन्धः
शोको मोहो भयं वा समविषममिदं न स्मरत्येव किंचित् ॥

Aaslishyaathmanamathma na kimapi
sahasaivantharam Veda baahyam

Yadhvat kamee videshath sadanamupagatho
ghaadamaslishya kaantham
Yatyastham thatra lokavyavahruthirakhila
punyapaapanubhandhaha
Soko Moho Bhayam vaa samavishamamidham
na smaratyeva kinchit ||

In that state, the verse says, nothing either *aanthara* (internal) or *baahya* (external) will be cognized. You will become the awareness of consciousness itself, cognizing that. Consciousness or *chetana* remains cognizing itself, that will be the state. When a teaspoonful of sugar is put in a glass of water, what happens to the sugar? Just when it was put, it remained separate from water, undissolved. But after a time, it got dissolved and thereby remained one with the water. Similarly, in the *samaadhi* state, the consciousness, which generally cognizes for you the body, outer objects, thoughts, emotions, etc., dissolves itself in its own source (as wave in the ocean water), thereby cognizing consciousness itself.

In other words, while in *gyaana-samaadhi,* the consciousness in you stands completely dissolved; it becomes unmodified, undifferentiated. That is to say, all thoughts, sentiments, figurations, etc., which are until then cognizable as separate, distinct entities, now become dissolved in the mother *chetana* within, to shine as one whole, which cannot be distinguished either as this or as that. And then it reveals itself, the revelation being in the nature of knowledge (*chit*), existence (*sat*) and *ananda* (*blissfulness*). Perhaps the example given in the verse will help you to know how the differences set and singleness shines all at once.

A paramour who was separated from his beloved for a long time at last returns to her (from a far off country). You can imagine—the state of his mind during his journey. There will be a number of criss-cross emotions in his mind, and under their pressure, the mind will be like a whirlwind. But on meeting the *kaanta* and embracing her, all these agitations will vaporise, and there will be a mystic (ineffable) feeling of elation and fulfilment. I don't know how that state is, though I know about the *samaadhi*-state. The verse says that during their embrace, everything in the mind stands suspended, they do not know anything inner or outer. At the same time they are not dead, not unconscious too. In the same way, during the *chaitanya-samaadhi,* all *loka-vyavaharaas* (worldly activities) giving rise to *punya* and *papa* (virtue and vice) and similarly grief, delusion, fear and the like—everything stands fully set. And there obtains a unique state of calm, serenity, freedom and pleasantness, which can only be described as *transcendental* or *supra-worldly.*

I would ask you all to try and experience the state and its blessedness yourselves. After all, the one purpose of all these lectures is to impress upon you the need for discovering your own Self, and then for reaching the state of true spiritual wisdom and illumination. If these talks do not fulfil this end, then they would be almost fruitless.

There is one more point which I wanted to tell you in connection with the Vedantic practice and Self-realization. It is about the role which the Guru or the Teacher plays in the matter. I shall recite a verse, the first verse in fact, from the same composition, *Satasloki* (century of verses of Sankara:)

दृष्टान्तो नैव दृष्टः त्रिभुवनजठरे सद्गुरोर्ज्ञानदातुः
स्पर्शश्चेत् तत्र कल्प्यः स नयति यदहो स्वर्णतामश्मसारं ।
न स्पर्शत्वं तथापि श्रितचरणयुगे सद्गुरुः स्वीयशिष्ये
स्वीयं साम्यं विधत्ते भवति निरुपमः तेन वाऽलौकिकोऽपि ॥

Drishtaantho naiva drishtaha tribhuvana
jathare Sadguror-gyaana daathuhu
Sparsaschet thatra kalpyaha sa nayathi yadaho
swarnatham asma-saaram
Na sparsatwam thathaapi sritha-charanayuge
sadguruhu sweeya-sishye
Sweeyam saamyam vidhathe bhavathi
nirupamaha thena va-aloukikopi

Sankara says when he looks around and examines the three worlds in order to find out a simile to amply illustrate the role which a *Sad guru* (a true spiritual preceptor) plays in giving illumination to the student who has sought his feet, he is unable to locate one. The thought of the 'philosopher's stone' (philosopher's stone is considered to have the mystic property of converting anything it touches into gold instantly) no doubt comes to his mind. But he finds that it falls short of the requirement. For the philosopher's stone can at best convert into gold, not to another philosopher's stone (that is itself), what it touches. But look at what transpires in the case of a student who has been touched by the *gyaana-daatha sad guru*. He is brought on a par with the teacher, he ascends to the same status in which the teacher himself is. That is to say the teacher is able to transmit into the student the knowledge and realization of his, thereby making the student himself a full knower of Truth, as the teacher is. Hence this is a transformation which far excels the other one, and therefore it is not anything wordly. Truly, the spiritual role which the Guru plays in the life of a seeker and student is supra-wordly, transcendental.

There is no reason why any human, who wants to seek and know the truth, his own Self, should not succeed. But you find quite a number of seekers not succeeding in their pursuit. The reason is the gross and subtle worldly currents flowing beneath their mind and intellect. It is generally impossible for them to know about and locate these currents and undercurrents. The contact with a divine teacher and his constant tuition alone will reveal to them their own weaknesses and mistakes, by the removal of which they will find their way to perfection in this very life. This benefit and care which the seekers receive in the hands of the spiritual teacher is something unique, mystic and inevitable. The gap you will feel in the absence of a true teacher cannot be filled at all. All seekers would do well to understand this point well beforehand.

7th day's talk: *28th Feb. 1970*

CONCLUSION—THE RIGHT WAY OF LIVING

For the past six days, we have been discussing at some length the broad subject 'Vedantic way of living.' Today we are to conclude the discussion. And hence we have to find out what will be the right way of living for us in the light of the Vedantic truths and ideals which we have come to know so far.

Vedanta has the aim of achieving for man the direct realization of God, which in other words denotes the realization of one's own Self. The Self or God is a thing most subtle and hence all-pervasive. To locate it further, it is the *chetana* (consciousness) which animates the body, making it erect and active.

For gaining the Vedantic goal or the realization of God or Self, we found there are several paths. No one of these paths, in truth, differs from any other, as the goal to be achieved by all is the same. The differences between the paths are like the differences you find in the clothes we put on our body. The clothes are widely different, in their texture, colour and design. The purpose to be served by all of them is, however, the same. A particular kind of cloth may appeal to a group of people, and another kind to another group. That is all.

In the same way, the religious paths (or even religions) are several, although all of them are intended to serve the same purpose. The ultimate object of every path or religion, is, as you know already, to gain for man a direct vision of God or the achievement of spiritual wisdom. By such vision or wisdom what we hope to win for us is the liberation from all kinds of miseries and agitations inevitable to earthly life.

With regard to the nature of the *karma, gyana* and *bhakthi sadhanas* or paths, I must say that they are closely inter-linked. It is wrong to think that there is any conflict at all between them. They are complementary to one another. Here is a significant verse of Hanuman, the devotee of Sri Rama, in which he reveals the inter-connection of the different outlooks-the devotion, the *gyana,* etc. You may remember this verse, whenever any confusion arises in your mind about the nature of the three types of *sadhana*:

देहबुध्या तु दासोऽस्मि जीवबुध्या त्वदंशकः ।
आत्मबुध्या त्वमेवाहं इति मे निश्चिता मतिः ।।
Deha-budhyaa thu daasosmi
Jeevabudhya thwadamsakaha
Atma-budhyaa thwamevaaham
Ithi me nischithaa mathihi

It is quite obvious that our life on earth is based upon the existence of the body. Until the body drops useless, life will continue. With the fall of the body, the visible life ends too.

Being so, the body-consideration cannot be avoided by any one, by the devotee or by the *gyana-sadhaka*. 'So long as the body-consideration prevails', says Hanuman, 'the feeling natural to my mind is that I am your servant.' The body makes us act variously. As long as actions are there, the feeling of *karthaa* (doership) becomes almost indispensable. 'As an actor' whatever I do is really to achieve your ends, not mine.' Thus it is, according to Hanuman, one becomes a servant of God, when his life is viewed in terms of *embodiment*.

Though we have a body, we cannot but think of the life which animates it as something separate from it (the body). In other words, as much as the body-consideration is natural for us, so natural is the consideration of the life in the body too. The life in the body, says Hanuman, being subtle is, unlike the body, 'part of the Almighty who is all-pervading'. While the body appears to be separate and evokes the thought that we are separate from God and our position is that of His servant, the thought of the life, of *jeeva,* gives us the notion that we are a part of the Almighty. The servant-feeling arises from the body, while the 'part' feeling arises from the *jeeva.*

Besides these two viewpoints, Hanuman speaks of another which he characterises as 'openness'. The idea of oneness with relation to the Almighty arises from a direct realization of one's own self. Apart from the body and the *jeeva,* there is the Atma in us. Atma denotes *that which is true* in us, that nature of ours which remains static, unchanging. A realization of this true or static nature, of the Atma in us, according to Hanuman, instantly tells us that we are in essence '*one with the Almighty*', of whom we think ourselves as servants on the one hand and 'part and parcel' on the other.

Thus there are three levels of understanding or vision which Hanuman speaks of: The first is 'I am your servant, O Lord'. The second is 'I am part of your existence'. The third is 'You and I are one'. See how clearly Hanuman has described the practical truths and realizations. This description must serve to clarify the entire truth about the various attitudes and paths which the religious souls adopt and pursue in order to achieve their spiritual ends.

Sometimes the body-view will help you. The thought that you are the servant or devotee of God will give you enough hope, courage and consolation. At other times, when you sit receding from activity and your mind becomes calm, the feeling that your life is part of the Almighty's existence, will appear true and realistic. There are yet another moments, when the mind remains utterly quite, silent and sublime. In such a state there will be no *vrittis* or modifications in the mind. No thought either secular or divine will rise. At the same time, you will be wakeful too. Then it is that the ultimate truth about your Self is glimpsed. You will realize from your own first hand experience that the entire universe is really one unbroken mass of existence, the substance of which is identical with the *chetana* or consciousness animating your body. Thus the 'Atmic realization', the experience of oneness, will be had. That realization will be as strong and influential as any other. It will be equally dominant in the mind. So side by side with the ideas of 'servanthood' and 'parthood', the idea of 'oneness' will also be at work in your mind, from then onwards. All the three will become true and helpful alternately. There will be no conflict or disagreement between them at all.

The three broad paths about which we spoke, namely the *karma, gyana* and *bhakthi,* all have only one ultimate end to serve for man. That end is the vision of God, the merger with the Self, within. About this end, there is no scope for doubt or questioning. Accepting this fact, let us see whether there is any standard or method, which we are to adopt in our daily life, so that the ultimate spiritual goal will be realized at least before the end of our lifetime. In other words, accepting the Vedantic view regarding the nature and fulfilment of human life, what is *the way of living* which the votaries of Vedanta have to chalk out for themselves, in their daily life and activity? This is the subject for today's talk. When this subject is dealt with, our present series of lectures will also have concluded.

The very fact of having been born in the world makes it necessary for us to live our life. Living implies the doing of a lot of work. It is through work or action that we achieve the things we want, we fulfil the desires of our heart. This being so, we have to know what are the broad Vedantic rules to which we have to submit our activities and thinking. The evolving and accepting of such rules becomes the first phase of our spiritual life and evolution.

The Seers of the past have evolved the four-fold *purushartha,* with the sole object of gaining for mankind true spiritual wisdom, illumination and fulfilment. I shall speak on them, and that will be sufficient for our purpose here.

The word *purushartha* means 'the object of pursuit for man'. By *purushartha,* therefore, is meant the thing or things which we are to achieve by virtue of our deliberate efforts. In the absence of our efforts, they cannot be had, they will not come to our possession. The *purusharthaas,* in other words, are not things or attainments which will come to us of themselves in course of time, like, say, the growth of the body or the thoughts arising in our mind. You should not, therefore, be indifferent to the *purusharthaas* and their achievement.

First of all, the sadhaka must gain a clear knowledge of what those *purusharthaas* are, and thereupon he must constantly work for them.

The *purusharthaas* are (1) *dharma* (2) *artha* (3) *kama* and (4) *moksha.* These are not so much different from one another, having a distinct aim for each. On the contrary, each of them has a close bearing upon the others, and in conjunction with the others each aims to obtain for man only one ultimate end. The ultimate end is the fourth *purushartha* itself, namely *moksha*. Normally, the fourth cannot be attained without passing through the three preceding ones. We shall take them up one after another and see what the implication of each is.

Dharma: Dharma has no proper English equivalent. It is generally translated as righteousness. *Dharma,* in truth, is a very abstruse concept. Its scope and definition will go on changing, depending upon various factors like *desa* (place), *kala* (time), station of life and the like. Again, as you go on evolving the *dharma* too will undergo transformation for you. Therefore, to give a full idea of *dharma* is rather hard. For instance, Udhdhava (a very high devotee of Krishna) questions Krishna—in the eleventh skandha of Bhagavatha—about the meaning of *guna* (good) and *dosha* (bad). In answer Krishna says:

गुणदोषदृशिर्दोषो गुणस्तूभयवर्जितः ॥

Guna dosha drisirdosho gunasthu-ubhaya
varjithaha

The very thought of the two concepts *guna* and *dosha* as different from one another is itself the *dosha*. And the vision which does not distinguish between them (*guna* and *dosha*) is the good (*guna*). This means that as long as the mind is rooted in the idea of difference, of the *dwandwaas,* it is under the grip of *dosha,* and when it rises above the idea of difference, it gets to *guna,* goodness.

I cited this instance only to show how the definition of *dharma* (in this case it was about *guna* and *dosha*) varies fantastically from time to time, from situation to situation, from stage to stage. However, on this ground it is not right for us to refrain from giving the normal codes of *dharma* for the evolution of devotees and *sadhakas.* I only wanted you to understand, at first, the abstruse nature of *dharma.*

Dharma is only a word which is used as a synonym for restraint. Restraint or regulation is 'a must' in our life. Its place and need have been accepted by every one, I believe. To have no restraints or regulation in any sphere of our life and activities is not to be a human at all.

The question of restraint arises only because there is every chance for non-restraint to take place. If a boy or girl is allowed to grow up unrestricted and unadvised, then nobody can say what he or she will do and will not do. Right tuition and codes of conduct are necessary, therefore, to make man evolve steadily towards the right ideals of life. The *dharmas* which will help the Vedantic student (nay all people alike) evolve and in the end realize the Vedantic ideal are, in the words of Manu:

अहिंसा सत्यमस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
एतत् सामासिकं धर्मं चातुर्वर्ण्येऽब्रवीत् मनुः ॥

Ahimsa sathyam astheyam soucham
indriyanigrahaha
Ethat saamaasikam dharmam chaaturvarnye
abraveet Manuhu

Keep this verse always as the ideal to be kept up throughout your life. It means: Ahimsa (non-injury), *sathyam* (truthfulness), *astheyam* (non-stealing), *soucham* (cleanliness), *indriya-nigrahaha* (sense-restraint), these are the common *dharma* to be practised by people belonging to all castes and societies.

Ahimsa: This word is generally taken to mean 'non-killing'. But it is not to be understood just as that. If you say non-killing is the rule to be observed in all walks of life, then it becomes unfeasible. Such a rule will put us in a very awkward position. Yudhishtira (in Mahabharatha) laments upon the endless slaughter of men and animals committed during the Mahabharatha war. He could not console himself, thinking over the possible consequences of his act. Finally he was taken to Bhishma the Great by Krishna, in order that the former (Bhishma) might console him. Bhishma started philosophising about the nature of the world and the cruel aspects of Nature Herself. In the course of his talks he gives out the following maxim:

जीवो जीवस्य जीवनं ॥

Jeevo jeevasya jeevanam.

It means 'life subsists on life'. This is the rule we find throughout the expressions of Nature. Even the vegetarians have to eat vegetables, in which is life thriving in one form or other. When we boil vegetables, we are in fact killing many of the vital and alive things in them. By so saying I do not mean that vegetarianism is defective. I only try to point out how the loss of life goes into the making of life, how such a feature is indispensable in the course of the world and our activities. (I always advocate vegetarianism ; it is a must for *sadhakas* and devotees.)

When man kills a being, then you can attribute many motives to the act. But what can you say about the unintelligent beings killing others for the sheer sake of sustaining their own lives? The lizard eats small flies and insects. Then that eater is eaten by the cat. The cat is in turn caught hold of by crocodiles. And the crocodiles are eaten off by the humans. Who knows who will come to eat the humans themselves? You find the large fishes eating the smaller ones of their own family. Thus Nature has set in operation a cyclic process of killing and preservation. Being so, to think of avoiding killing—in one form or another—altogether in our life is not correct. It will be an ideal, unnatural, unfeasible. The *dharmic* code of *ahimsa* has to be considered in this background.

Ahimsa denotes the principle of resisting from harming or injuring others (where harming can be avoided). This principle requires to be laid down, because every one is habitually selfish and selfishness makes him infringe upon others' freedom and right to live. Such infringement is the thing to be checked. We must be prepared to grant the others a right to have their living. as much as we ourselves have. We should not do to anyone what we do not want to be done to ourselves. 'Do unto others what you would unto you', this will be a good standard for our actions.

At the same time, when it comes to a question of checking the unsocial tendencies of people, we should not be negligent or fearful. To mete out punishment where it is due, to enforce law and order when they are called for, these are not against *dharma*. Suppose a certain finger of our body is badly infected and you find that if the infection is allowed to grow, then it will destroy the entire body. You will not hesitate to remove the infected finger. The doctor who removes the finger is never charged for any act of slaughter or *himsa*. What he does is on the other hand preservation (of life) not its destruction. The law which says that the murderer should be hanged is also a similar one. The thief has to be jailed and punished. I speak this much about *himsa* and *ahimsa,* so that you may understand the true import of both. *Ahimsa* is even today a misunderstood ideal.

There is the celebrated saying: *Ahimsa paramo dharmah (ahimsa* is the highest *dharma).* But there is another line to be added to it: *dharma himsa thathaiva cha.* This line would mean, *himsa* for the sake of *dharma,* its protection, is as high a duty as *ahimsa* is. With this much of explanation, I leave the matter for you to understand. If Budhism failed to live long in Bharat, one of its reasons is the unfeasible code of *ahimsa* which it enjoined. The Vedantic Seers have always gone deeper and deeper into the mysteries and rhythm of Nature and have discovered the ultimate truths and laws of existence. They have declared boldly what they found, without any reluctance or apprehensions. '*Jeevo jeevasya jeevanam*' is one such truth which they unearthed.

Satyam: the second tenet. This implies that one should speak what is true. *Sathyam* has a much deeper and subtler meaning, which I do not elaborate now.

For the time being, understand that we should always speak truthfully. Suppose you have done or experienced something. When it comes to a question of reporting it, you should say what has taken place; not anything different. There is a general tendency in our mind to always flout this law and achieve our ends by hook or crook. You would have seen many children—children are always considered to be very innocent — sometimes speaking, untruthfully. They have, I should say, *inherited* this tendency.

Here lies the scope for working out our chosen end. The end is *sathyam*. Always bear it in mind and see that your words and deeds conform to it. The *purushartha,* in this case, must be sathya.

Seeing it clearly in your front, save yourselves from falling a prey to untruthfulness or *asathya*.

Astheyam: This denotes non-stealing. To steal the property of another is always bad. It is against *dharma*. *Astheyam* becomes part of *dharma*, when we take into the natural tendency of the human mind to resort to stealing. Here again it is a question of finding out whether there is any such trait in your mind, and checking it if found. Astheyam does not just denote non-stealing. It refers to all other similar habits. That is, you should not do anything by way of taking away from people what is theirs, or refusing them what is theirs, legitimate right, etc. The larger interests of the society should be kept up always and in all matters. Even the so-called 'socialism' is contained in this code.

Soucham: This word denotes cleanliness. By cleanliness is meant not merely the physical or external neatness, but the mental or internal purity too. Keep the body and its parts very clean, so also your house and workspots. But do not stop there. Make the mind too pure and serene. For the *sadhaka*, the mind within the body is in a way more important than the body in which the mind is. The mental cleanliness is generally described as purity. As is the bodily hygiene so also is the mental. It is to ensure mental hygiene that various codes of *dharma* are prescribed.

Indriyanigraha: This is really the measuring yard for *dharmic* life. Whether you are a *dharmanishtha* or not will be judged by how far you are able to practise *indrianigrahah,* sense-restraint. It is the senses that always connect us to the outside objects. For one who has no senses, there is no outside world at all.

In connecting us to objects outside, each of the senses has the power to create normally either of the two basic forces or reactions, namely *raaga* (desired) and *dwesha* (hatred). As Geetha puts it:

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत् तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ।।

Indriasya indriasya arthe raga-dweshou
vyavasthithou
Thayor-na vasam aagachet thou hyasya
paripanthinou

Every sense object carries with it the two forces, namely attraction and repulsion (*raga-dweshas*). The success of human life consists in cultivating the ability not to succumb to them. Hence the warning 'do not fall a prey to them, for they are your enemies'. *Dharma* consists in the constant effort to keep away *raga-dweshas,* for which purpose the restraint of the senses is indispensable.

Unfortunately, right from ancient times, our people have been negligent about the basic need of sense-restraint. They freely pose themselves as religious and go on doing several kinds of worship, prayers and rituals, staunchly believing that such performance is the *sine qua non* of religiousness and spirituality. But in spite of what they do, their senses are most powerfully, unrestricted. Their feeling is that the fact that they do rituals and worship is itself a full licence for indulging in sensory delights and comforts lavishly.

Such an attitude is wrong. It has to be corrected the soonest. You should understand that the basic factor in the pursuit of a *dharmic* life is the restraint we are able to wield over our five senses. Throughout the seventeen chapters of Geetha you will find the lessons on sense restraint repeatedly given.

I have now lotd you in brief what is the nature of *dharmic* life, particularly for a Vedantic student or seeker.

Now we pass on to the next *purusharthaa,* namely *artha.* This refers to money or wealth. Our Sastras do not, as some are inclined to think, eschew wealth or comforts. On the other hand, they have enjoined riches as the second item in the pursuit of a *dharmic* life. The primary need for food, shelter and clothing cannot be overlooked by any one, especially by a seer of truth. As long as the body lasts, it requires to be fed, clothed and sheltered. As many bodies are there with you in your family, all of them have to be similarly looked after. For that you evidently require the medium called wealth. How can you have wealth unless you exert yourself for achieving it ?

The wealth that man can have is divided into three kinds. The best of these is the *arthaa* that you acquire out of your own direct effort Our Sastras have regarded such self-earned riches as the best, the *uthama.* Next to it is the money or property which has been bequeathed to you by your parents. If you gain your needs making use of your parental property or riches, then you belong to the second rate or mediocre kind. The third kind, which is the *adhama,* the lowest, is the money or property which you gain by virtue of your marriage alliance, i.e., wife's property. The riches coming to you through your wife is 'inferior', says our Sastra. Knowing these three, it is for you to decide upon your fate, your course of action.

I have said this much only to make you know that according to the view of our ancients, there is no room for laziness on the part of man. Everybody is asked to exert himself well enough in order that he may have the necessary means for livelihood. *Artha* or money has been enjoined as an item of pursuit itself.

Now comes the third *purushartha.* With the riches that you have, you must procure the objects of your desire. Whatever things your mind wishes for, obtain them using the money you have earned or inherited. In doing so, you should not either over-spend or under-spend. Whatever be the standards you are used to, maintain them. Do not go on borrowing money disproportionately and thereby destroying your future. Do not also be stingy, in case you have enough money. Money is for spending, but for spending wisely and well

Thus acquisition of wealth and thereupon spending it, these two are the second and third *purusharthaas.* In gaining both these *purusharthaas,* you should see that *dharma* is not abused or neglected.

If you have successfully gone through these three, then you will naturally be ripe for the last *purushartha,* namely *moksha,* about which the non-*Bharatheeyaas* have apparently very little idea.

Moksha literally means release, freeing or freedom. What is the release that we speak of ? It is the release from whatever you have to get released.

Dharma, artha and *kama* have been the objects of your pursuit. On account of your efforts, they from afar came to you, and thereby you were bound by them. Life, throughout its course, is one of bondage. Unless we understand that this is so and then try to get released from it, the bondage will persist ever and ever. It is the release from the previous three *purusharthaas* as well as from everything that comes within their fold, that the term *moksha* denotes. As are the *purusharthaas* (three of them) to be worked for and earned, this last *purusharthaa* is also to be worked for and earned. By earning the last *purushartha,* you are only preparing to depart from the world with peace and joy.

It is obvious that every one born and living in the world will one day have to die. Death makes us depart from the world, shedding even the body which remains inseparable from us right from the moment of birth. What then to speak of having to shed the other belongings and bondages like the house, relatives, wealth, name, fame, etc. Even if we have riches and through their power we go on enjoying the things of the world, one after another, the drama must come to an end one day. Seeing this eventuality beforehand, should we not prepare our mind for it right early ? The effort for *moksha* is thus quite natural and necessary.

By enjoining the fourth *purushartha, moksha,* the Vedanta intends to complete and fulfil our life hundred per cent. The Vedantic vision alone teaches man to live as well as to leave, to get hold of the world as also to get rid of it, to own it as well as to disown it.

The attainment of *moksha* is unlike the others. For getting *moksha* what you have to do is to understand the truth. The truth is not about anything else. It is about the 'I' in you. When you thus understand your own Self and find it to be Sat-Chit-Ananda, then by virtue of that knowledge all the efforts at getting into the company of any objects for the sake of delight or comfort becomes unnecessary. You will live a natural, normal life, with whatever things or habits—provided they do not go against what the *purusharthaas* have laid down—you are used to, deriving your contentment and delight always from your own Self.

All the preceding three *purusharthaas* are intended to only subserve the last one, *moksha*. It is not possible, normally, to take to the last *purushartha* all at once. Hence a process of sublimation and maturation is necessary. Live your life with a view to abandon it in the end. Foster desires and fulfil them with a view to dispensing with them altogether in the end. Do work always, but with a view to renouncing it after acquiring the necessary maturity. Court bondage with the sure object of getting rid of it finally. This is the method adopted throughout the Vedantic way of living.

A verse from the eleventh *skandha* of Bhagavatham comes to my mind, which will summarise for you the correct view about human life and the ultimate object to be gained in it:

लब्ध्वा सुदुर्लभमिदं बहुसंभवान्ते
मानुष्यमर्थदमनित्यमपीह धीरः ।
तूर्णं यतेत न पतेत् अनुमृत्यु यावत्
निःश्रेयसाय विषयः खलु सर्वतः स्यात् ॥

Labdhvaa Sudurlabhamidam Bahusambhavanthe
Manushyamarthadamanithyamapeeha dhiraha
Thoornam yathetha na patheth anumrithyu yaavath
Nisreyasaya vizhayaha khalu sarvataha syaath ||

At the end of several *janmas*, somehow the human life has been obtained. We are fortunate in this. But this fortune will have no meaning unless we consider it our prime duty to exert earnestly for liberating us from impermanence and attain *moksha* (*nissreyasa*).

Suppose we omit to work *moksha,* through the realization of our own Self, what will be our fate? We shall just be enjoying the objects of the senses. But such enjoyment is nothing great or rare. Even the animals, birds, insects, etc., are having it in ample measure. So, if our purpose is to enjoy the sense-objects and no more, then a human birth is not necessary. Not only that. In the human birth, our chance and scope for the sense—indulgence is limited in various ways. If you want to eat enough then you had better be an elephant, for the elephant has the largest belly. Compared to the restrictions which the humans are expected to observe, the animals have a much better and freer life.

On grounds of sensory delight, the human birth is not, therefore, supreme. It is not anything rare. The rarety comes only when we consider the chance which the human has in working his way out of destruction and impermanence. The knowledge of Self is available to man alone, and that knowledge has the power of redeeming him from bondage and impermanence. The *nissreyasa* or *moksha* alone will be a worthy ideal for his pursuit. All other things are inferior, and should subserve that.

How Self-knowledge and *moksha* can be had is already clear to you. A life given to the pursuit of the *purusharthaas* we have dealt with will pave the way for you. Such a life is no more than one of moderation. Moderation is to be practised in the sensory and mental levels alike. Always be conscious of the temporary or fleeting nature of your life, as well as of the things of the world. Your body will pass off one day. So too your parents' bodies, the bodies of your children and other relatives. When any one passes off, you should not find the event unexpected.

Keep the primary codes of *dharma* in mind, and always match your deeds with them to see how far are they right or wrong. Correct yourself constantly. Whatever station or status of life you belong to, whatever your congenital tendencies are, keep to them, but see that you always progress towards fulfilment. Remember always that there are so many others like you living in the world. Try to help them in whatever little manner you can and whenever possible. Always cultivate virtues like compassion, love, forbearance, pardoning, etc.

Let your ideal be always on the Truth, on the Atman within your body, on the Brahman remaining everywhere. Dedicate your life as a sublime offering on to that Reality, the Eternal God.

Self-realization and thereby winning immortality and peace, that 'nothing-short-of-it' should be your ideal. Everything you do or attain should only be subservient to it. Every indulgence or enjoyment must serve to sublimate your passions and stabilize your intellect.

Do not neglect your obligations. Do not be weak minded. Be always brave and sympathetic. Whenever you are gripped by weakness or diffidence, remember God and the Atman. Try always to rise beyond all kinds of 'divisions' created by the mind. Perceive the truth *oneness*.

From the changing to the changeless from ignorance to knowledge, from bondage to liberation, from misery to happiness—this should be your watchword always.

Finally, let me tell you, do not doubt whether it is possible for you to live with Self-realization in the world, while living in a body and having to fulfil the body-needs. You can surely realize that you are the Self, the Atma, even when you live in the body and remain active in various ways. To illustrate this truth, I shall cite two examples:

स्वीकुर्वन् व्याघ्रवेषं स्वजठरभृतये भीषयन् यश्च मुग्धान्
मत्वा व्याघ्रोऽहंमित्थं स नरपशुमुखान् बाधते किन्तु सत्वान् ।
मत्वा स्त्रीवेषधारी स्त्र्यहमिति कुरुते किं नटो भर्तुरिच्छां
तद्वत् शारीर आत्मा पृथगनुभवतो गेहतो यश्च साक्षी ॥

शतस्लोकि

Sweekurvan vyaghravesham Swajatarabrithaye
bheeshayan yascha mugdhaan
Mathvaa vyaghraha-aham-iththam sa narapasu-
mukhan badhathe kinnu sathwan
Mathvaa sthreeveshadharee sthrayahamithi
kuruthe kim nato bharthurichchaam
Thadvath saareera aathmaa prithaganubhavatho
gehatho yascha sakshee

—*Satasloki*

The wayfarer puts on the skin of a tiger, and with that on he goes on frightening young boys and girls, thus behaving like a tiger in front of the onlookers. He does so for eking out his livelihood. However, while behaving like a tiger, thereby putting up the appearance of the real tiger, does he forget the fact that he is a man (not the tiger) and as a result pounce upon cows and the men around ?

Again, the man who acts the role of a woman (in a drama) puts on the woman's dress and does everything that befits a woman. In the process, however, does he lose his identity and go on panting for a husband?

Both these instances clearly show to us how the appearance and the Reality (each different from the other), both, remain side by side without any conflict. The mind does not confuse one with the other. On the other hand, it retains both with equal force and realism.

In the same way, you can live in the visible world, with the visible body inseparable from you. At the same time, you can retain the ultimate truth that you are the body-different Self, the Atma, invisible yet experiential to the core. Such a realization does not offer any conflict with our present vision or understanding. It only contributes to it, thereby fulfilling it pleasantly.

Let us now conclude the present session. I hope all of you will live true to the wisdom you have gained from these talks. May all the forces in the world here and hereafter help and bless you to attain prosperity as well as peace and freedom. My hearty love and blessings to you all.